steve niles

CRIMINAL MACABRE™

the cal mcdonald mysteries

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 1

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This volume collects *Criminal Macabre: A Cal McDonald Mystery* #1–#5, "A Letter from B.S." from the Dark Horse comic *Drawing on Your Nightmares*, the *Love Me Tenderloin* one-shot, and *Last Train to Deadsville* #1–#4, all published by Dark Horse Comics; *Supernatural Freak Machine* #1–#3, published by IDW; and *Supernatural Freak Machine* #4–#5, previously unpublished.

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CONTENTS

CRIMINAL MACABRE: A CAL MCDONALD MYSTERY 7

A LETTER FROM B.S. 145

LOVE ME TENDERLOIN 155

LAST TRAIN TO DEADSVILLE 183

SUPERNATURAL FREAK MACHINE 275

SKETCHBOOK 387

BLACK CAT Club

Cal McDonald saw his first dead body when he was eight years old—a headless corpse rotting in an embankment—setting the tone for the rest of his life. Cal shares company with the ghoul community, an undead society that aids him in his cases as a private dick. A pill-popping, alcoholic degenerate, teamed up with his ghoul associate, Mo'Lock, Cal is up against a growing horde of monsters. After following a living head from his old haunt of Washington, DC, to the sin-infested streets of LA, Cal and his army of the undead are ready to blast every single werewolf, demon, occultist, and vampire back to fuckin' hell!

BLACK CAT Club

CRIMINAL MACABRE:
A CAL MCDONALD MYSTERY

BEN 2003
TEMPLESMITH

story
STEVE NILES

art
BEN TEMPLESMITH

letters
PAT BROSSEAU

BLACK CAT
Club

CUT THE CRAP MCDONALD. WE HAVE BODIES...
...PROPERTY DAMAGE...
WE KNOW YOU WERE THERE.
WE CAN DO THIS THE EASY WAY...
...OR THE HARD WAY.
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT COPS.

THEY LIKE TO PLAY IT TOUGH, BUT HALF OF THEM ARE ON THE VERGE OF *COMPLETE* EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWNS.
I'VE *BEEN* TALKING. PROBLEM IS YOU BOYS AREN'T LISTENING. IF YOU PROMISE TO FOCUS, I'LL RUN THROUGH IT AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ALL YOU SEE IS THE WORST OF THE WORST, WHEN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE REVOLVES AROUND THE WORLD'S BUTTHOLE.
I SHOULD KNOW. I USED TO BE A COP, UNTIL THEY FOUND ME PASSED OUT IN MY SQUAD CAR AND RAN A COUPLE DRUG TESTS.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, I FAILED.

BUT I FIND THEY GET REALLY TESTY WHEN ALL YOU TALK ABOUT ARE *MONSTERS.*
OKAY... ONE MORE TIME, AND TRY TO INSERT A LITTLE **REALITY** INTO THIS ONE.
GOT A BUTT?
THANKS.
NOW, JUST REMEMBER ONE THING...
...YOU ASKED.
LIKE I SAID BEFORE...
...IT ALL STARTED AS A QUICK, OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE OF *VAMPIRISM.*
NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS...

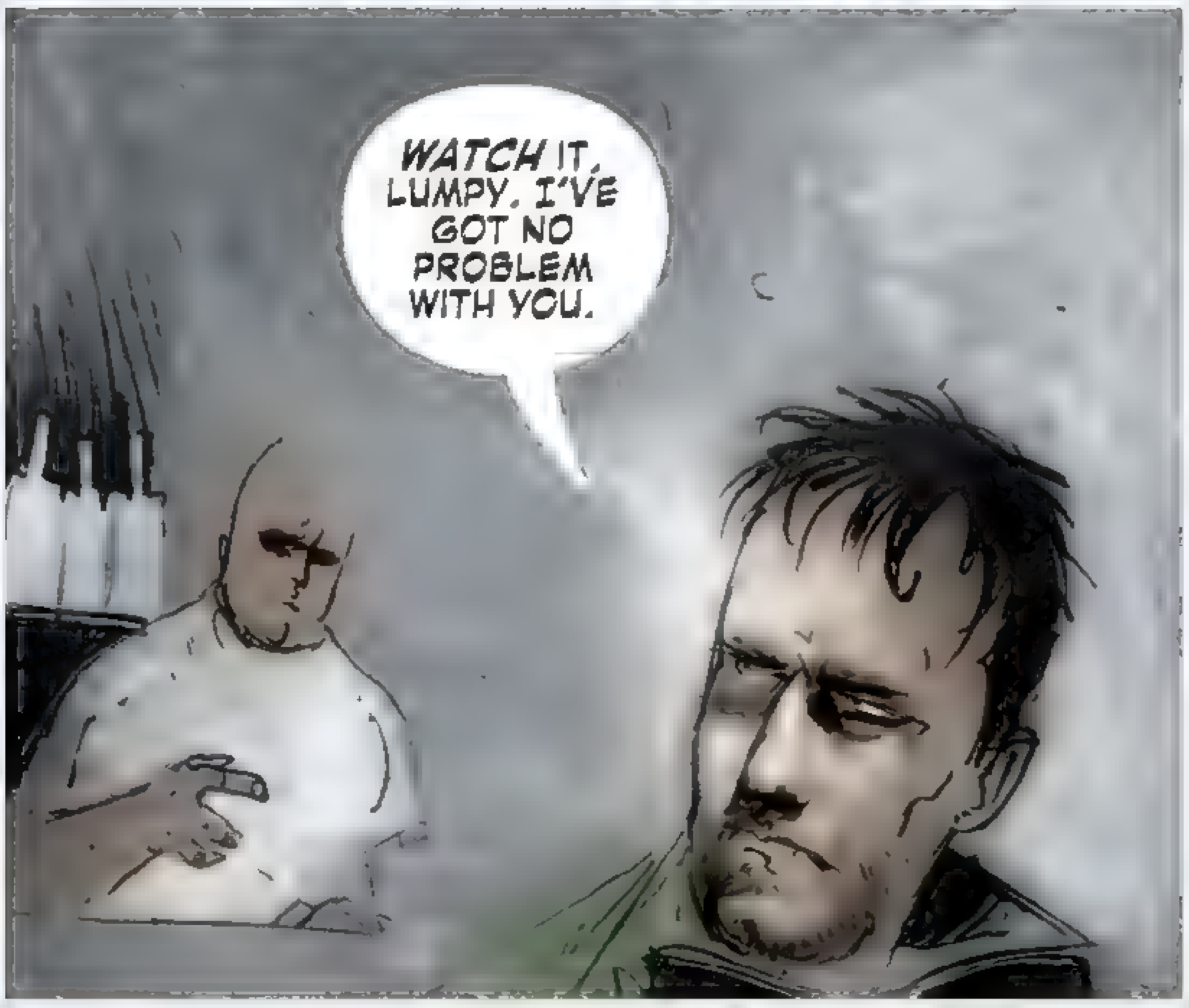
I WAS TRACKING A BLOODSUCKER PUNK-ASS WHO WAS DOING A LITTLE *AFTER-HOURS* WORK ON SOME U.C.L.A. COEDS.
I THINK L.A.P.D. REPORTED THE ATTACKS AS *UNUSUAL HOMICIDES.* I'D CALL A VICTIM COMPLETELY DRAINED OF BLOOD A LITTLE *MORE* THAN UNUSUAL, BUT THAT'S JUST ME.
GET ON WITH IT, MCDONALD, OR SO HELP ME...
I WASN'T HAVING MUCH LUCK UNTIL I RECEIVED A TIP FROM A GHOUL I KNOW.
"A GIRL"?
A *GHOUL.* COME ON, TRY TO KEEP UP.
YOU SURE IT'S HIM? OKAY, THANKS, CREEPY. I OWE YOU ONE.
NO, *MO'LOCK'S* NOT HERE... I HAVE NO IDEA. I'M NOT HIS FUCKIN' SECRETARY.

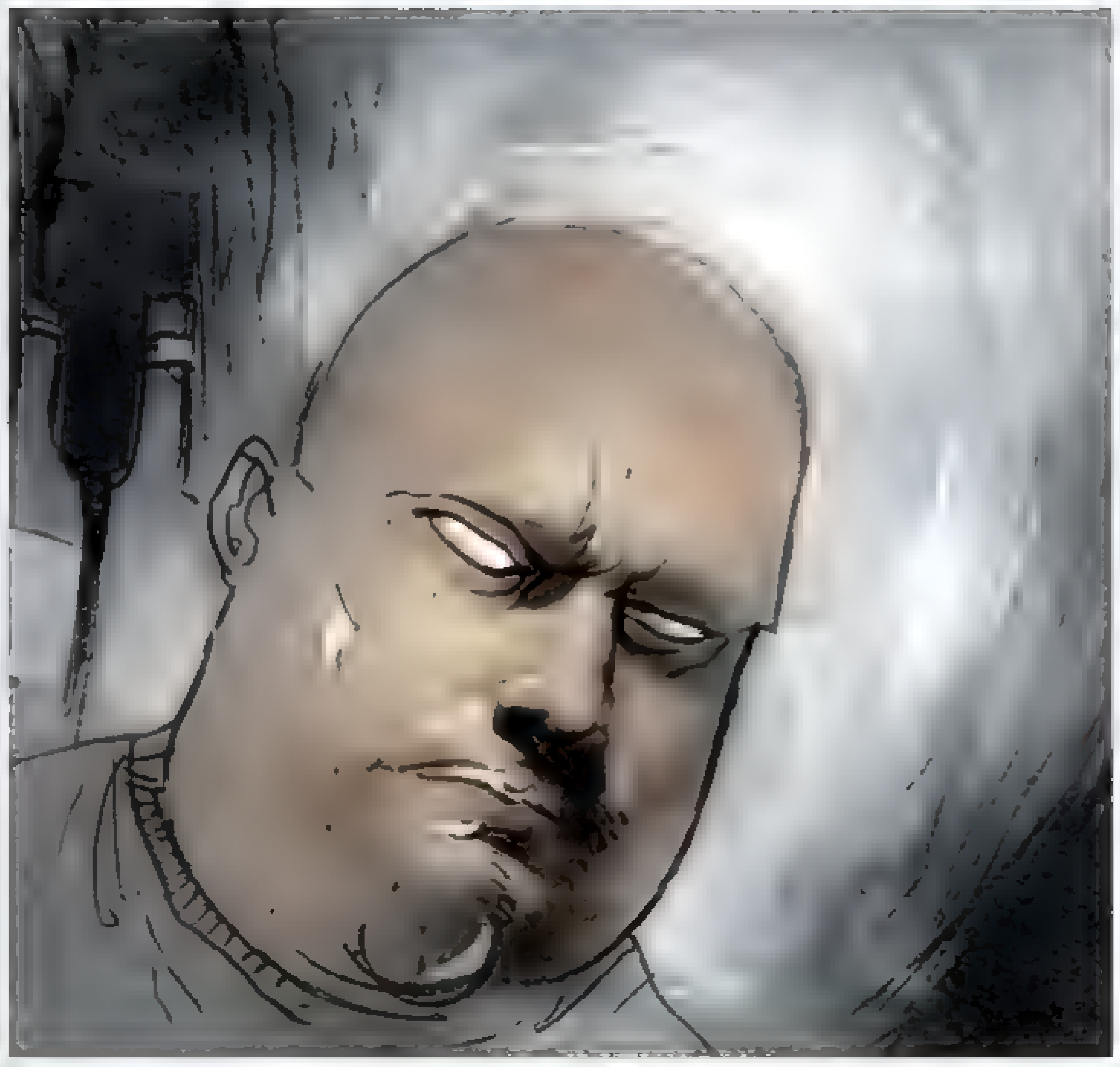
THE *TIP* WAS THAT A CERTAIN WEASEL OF A VAMPIRE HAD BEEN SKULKING AROUND A NIGHTCLUB IN HOLLYWOOD.
LIKE A LOT OF BLOODSUCKERS, HE WAS USUALLY SICKLY LOOKING, LIKE A JUNKIE, DUE TO LACK OF FEEDING. BUT LATELY HE'D BEEN LOOKING PRETTY WELL FED, SO I DECIDED TO CHECK IT OUT.
FIRST THINGS FIRST-- SILVER BULLETS, CROSSES, STAKES THROUGH THE HEART-- THAT'S ALL A BUNCH OF HORSESHIT.
FACT IS THERE AIN'T NOTHING THAT WALKS THE EARTH THAT CAN'T BE TAKEN DOWN WITH A SLUG OR A SOLID BLOW TO THE HEAD.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE LORE. MAYBE IT WAS DIFFERENT A LONG TIME AGO, BUT MODERN TIMES CALL FOR MODERN METHODS.

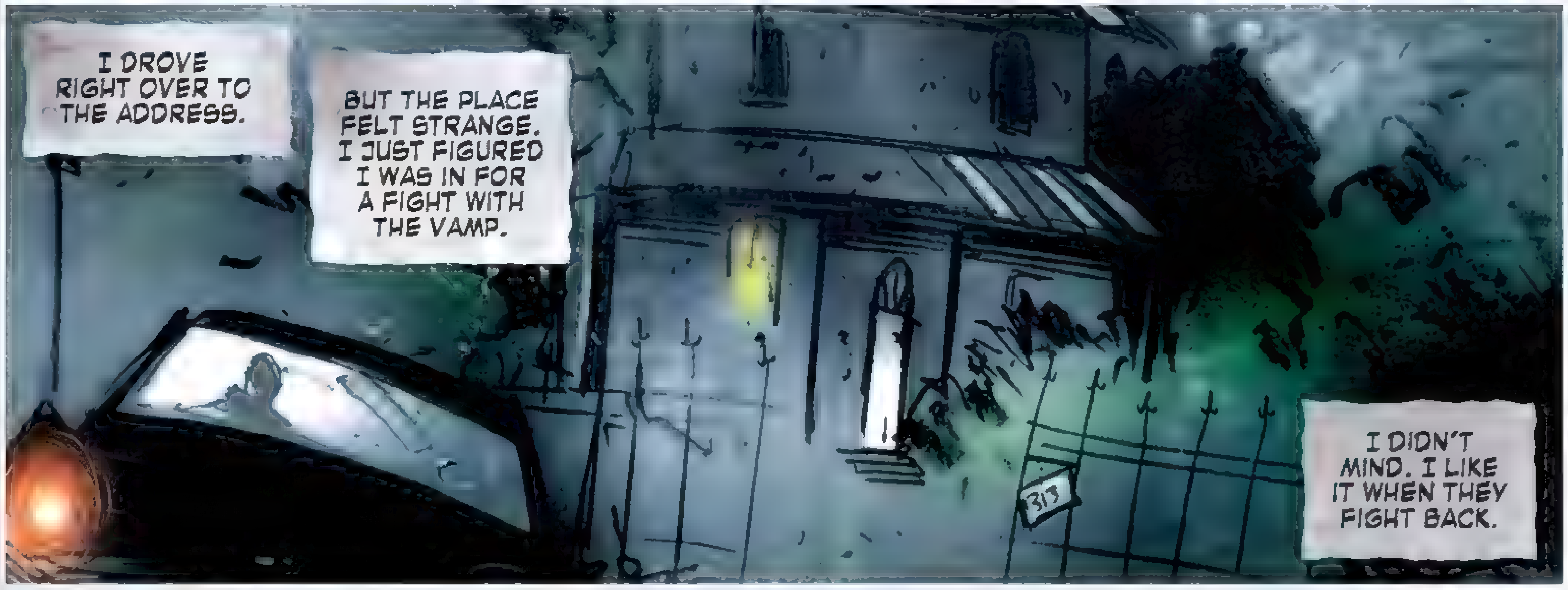
I USED TO LIVE IN D.C., BUT I GOT SICK OF THE SAME OLD CRAP AND LEFT.
I CAME TO L.A. FOLLOWING A SEVERED HEAD, AND I'VE BEEN HERE EVER SINCE.
BIG BOB'S
IT'S ALL RIGHT HERE.
I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF THE SUN, BUT THE PEOPLE KEEP TO THEMSELVES IN LOS ANGELES.
LIKE MOST MAJOR CITIES, GHOULS ARE PRETTY MUCH EVERYWHERE IN L.A. THEY'RE JUST A LITTLE MORE ACTIVE HERE.
BACK EAST, THEY WERE HARD *BLUE-COLLAR* WORKERS, BUT HERE SOME ARE COPS AND MOVIE PRODUCERS.
HOW'S IT GOING, MCDONALD?
TAKING IT AS IT COMES. HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU?
THE REST ARE STRAIGHT-UP, SLACK-ASS *LURKERS.*
THOSE ARE THE GHOULS I'M USED TO.
PRETTY DEAD.

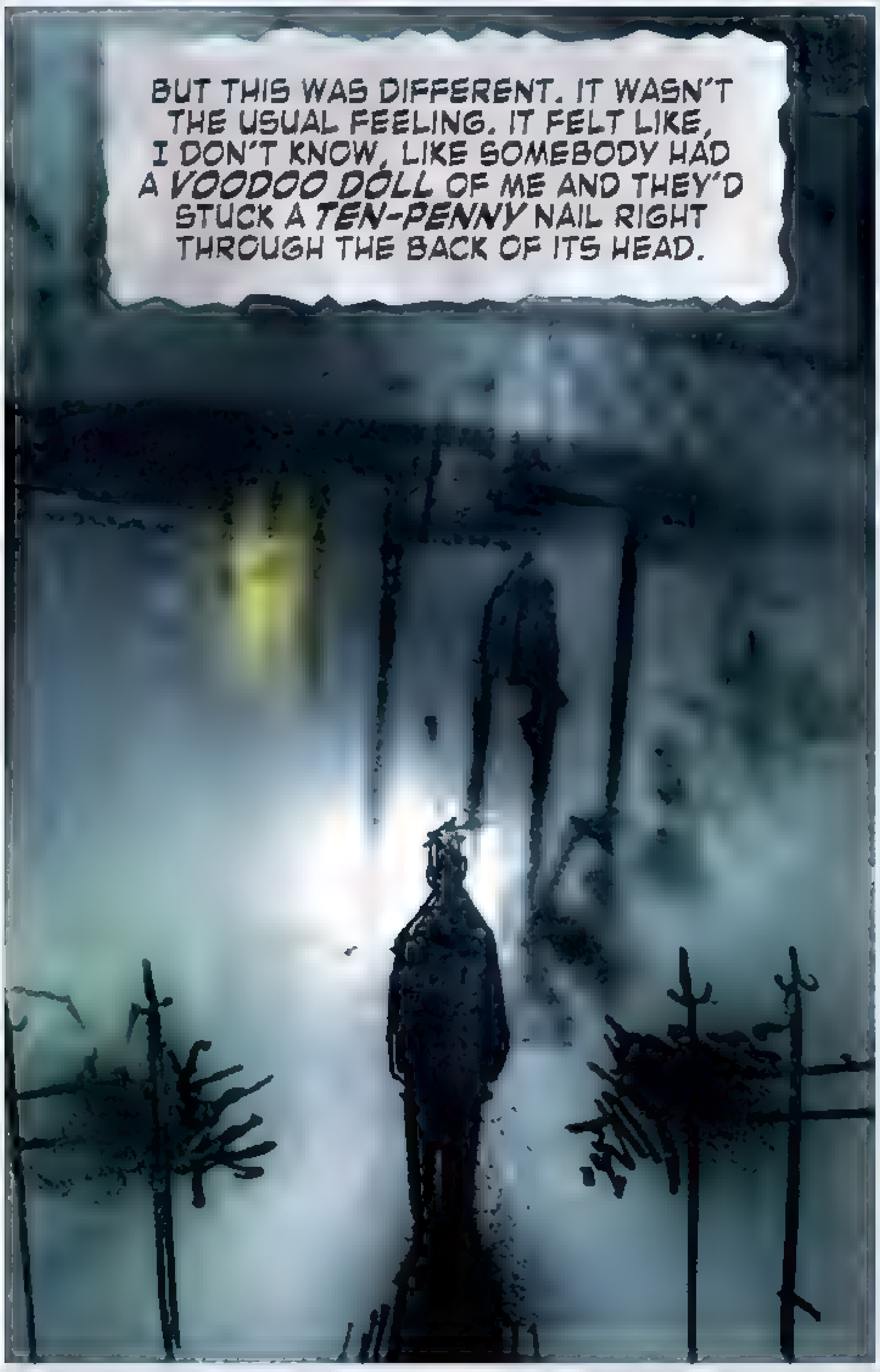
MY *BLOODSUCKER* HAD BEEN SPOTTED SLUMMING AT A SLEAZY WATERING HOLE CALLED *THE BLACK CAT CLUB.*
THE BLACK CAT CLUB
THE CAT WAS A DIVE KNOWN TO ATTRACT LOWLIFES AND NO-LIFES...
...AND THE USUAL LOT OF *UNNATURAL FREAKS.*
EXIT
BUT I WASN'T LOOKING FOR FREAKS.
NOT THIS TIME.
I WAS LOOKING FOR A *VAMPIRE.*
AND *BINGO,* THERE HE WAS, LOOKING PRETTY WELL FED, PRETENDING TO HAVE A BEER.
PROBLEM WAS, MONSTER INFESTED OR NOT, THE DIVE WAS A PUBLIC BAR.
AS MUCH AS I WANTED TO, I COULDN'T JUST STROLL OVER AND BLOW HIS BRAINS ALL OVER THE RACKS OF WATERED-DOWN HOOCH.

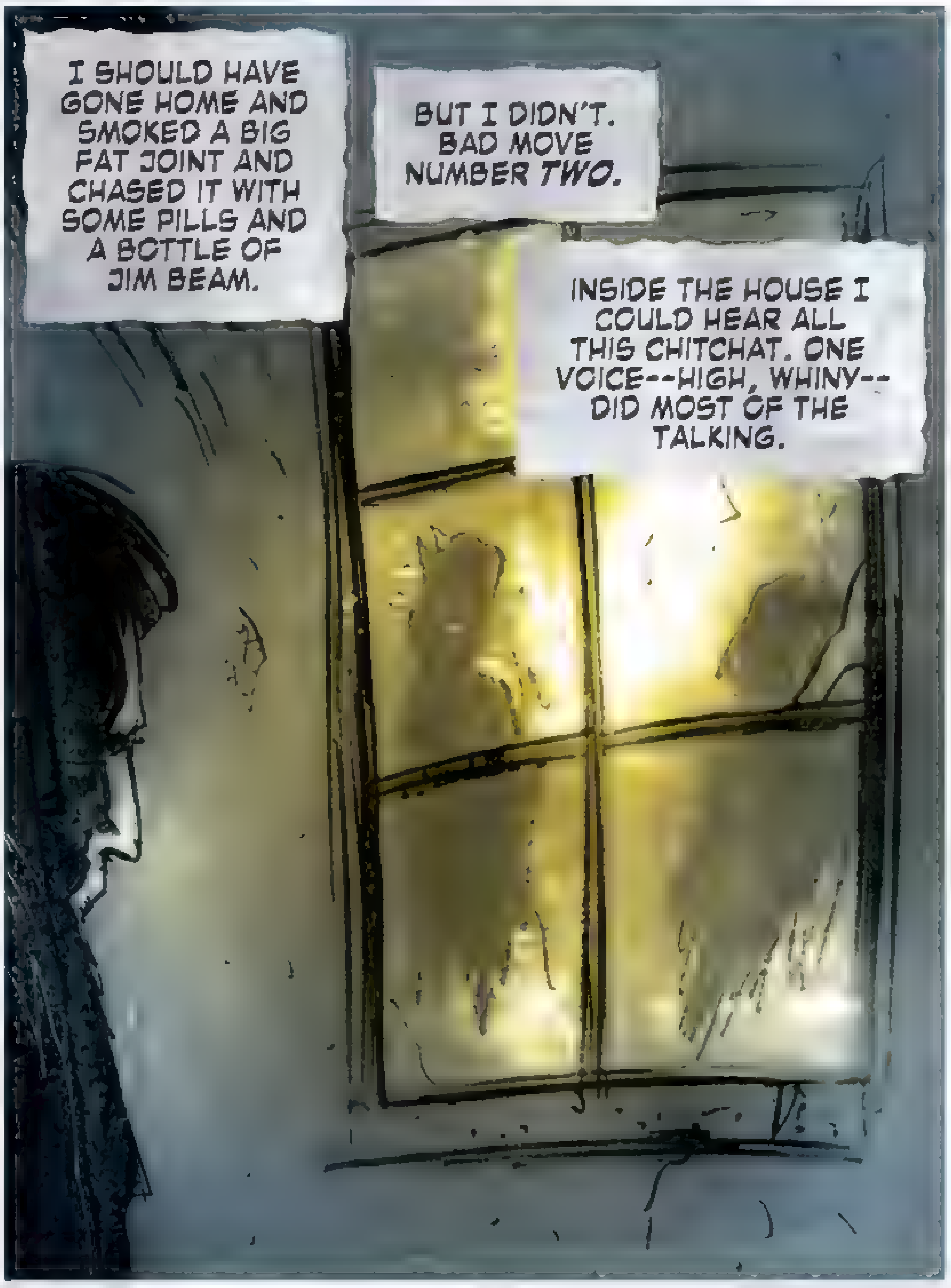
LUCKY FOR ME, SUCKY SPOTTED ME AND PANICKED.
BUMP
I LET HIM, BUT I STAYED CLOSE AND MADE CONTACT.
KRIIISH
OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK. LIFT THE WALLET, TRACK HIM TO HIS LAIR, AND POUND A TABLE LEG THROUGH HIS CHEST, NICE AND PRIVATE LIKE.
THANKS.
VAMPIRES ARE LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE IN LOS ANGELES. IF YOU WANT TO GET AROUND, YOU GOTTA DRIVE. YOU WANNA DRIVE WITHOUT L.A.P.D. HAULING YOU OFF TO A CELL, YOU GOTTA HAVE A LICENSE.
EX
YOU'D THINK THEY'D AT LEAST USE A FAKE *ADDRESS* OR SOMETHING--BUT NO, VAMPIRES ARE AS RETARDED AS MOST HUMANS.
AND THIS GENIUS NOT ONLY HAD AN ADDRESS ON HIS LICENSE, HE HAD ANOTHER ONE WRITTEN ON A PIECE OF PAPER.
IT WAS A LITTLE CLOSER TO DRIVE TO THAN THE ONE IN THE I.D., SO I DECIDED TO CHECK IT OUT FIRST.
THAT WAS THE FIRST IN A *LONG* SERIES OF *BAD MOVES.*
1313 MATHESON LANE


WATCH IT, LUMPY. I'VE GOT NO PROBLEM WITH YOU.




I DROVE RIGHT OVER TO THE ADDRESS.
BUT THE PLACE FELT STRANGE. I JUST FIGURED I WAS IN FOR A FIGHT WITH THE VAMP.
313
I DIDN'T MIND. I LIKE IT WHEN THEY FIGHT BACK.


BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT. IT WASN'T THE USUAL FEELING. IT FELT LIKE, I DON'T KNOW, LIKE SOMEBODY HAD A *VOODOO DOLL* OF ME AND THEY'D STUCK A *TEN-PENNY* NAIL RIGHT THROUGH THE BACK OF ITS HEAD.

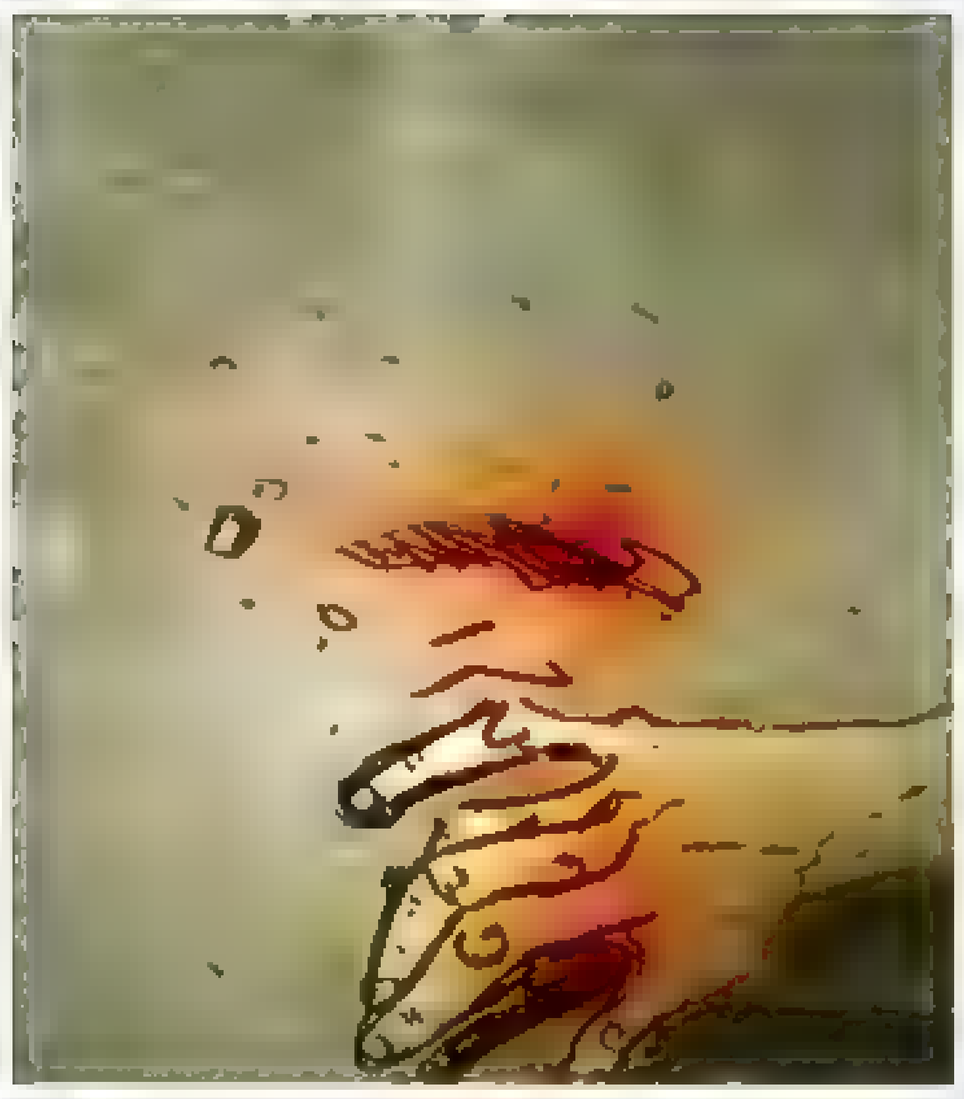

I SHOULD HAVE GONE HOME AND SMOKED A BIG FAT JOINT AND CHASED IT WITH SOME PILLS AND A BOTTLE OF JIM BEAM.
BUT I DIDN'T. BAD MOVE NUMBER *TWO*.
INSIDE THE HOUSE I COULD HEAR ALL THIS CHITCHAT. ONE VOICE--HIGH, WHINY--DID MOST OF THE TALKING.

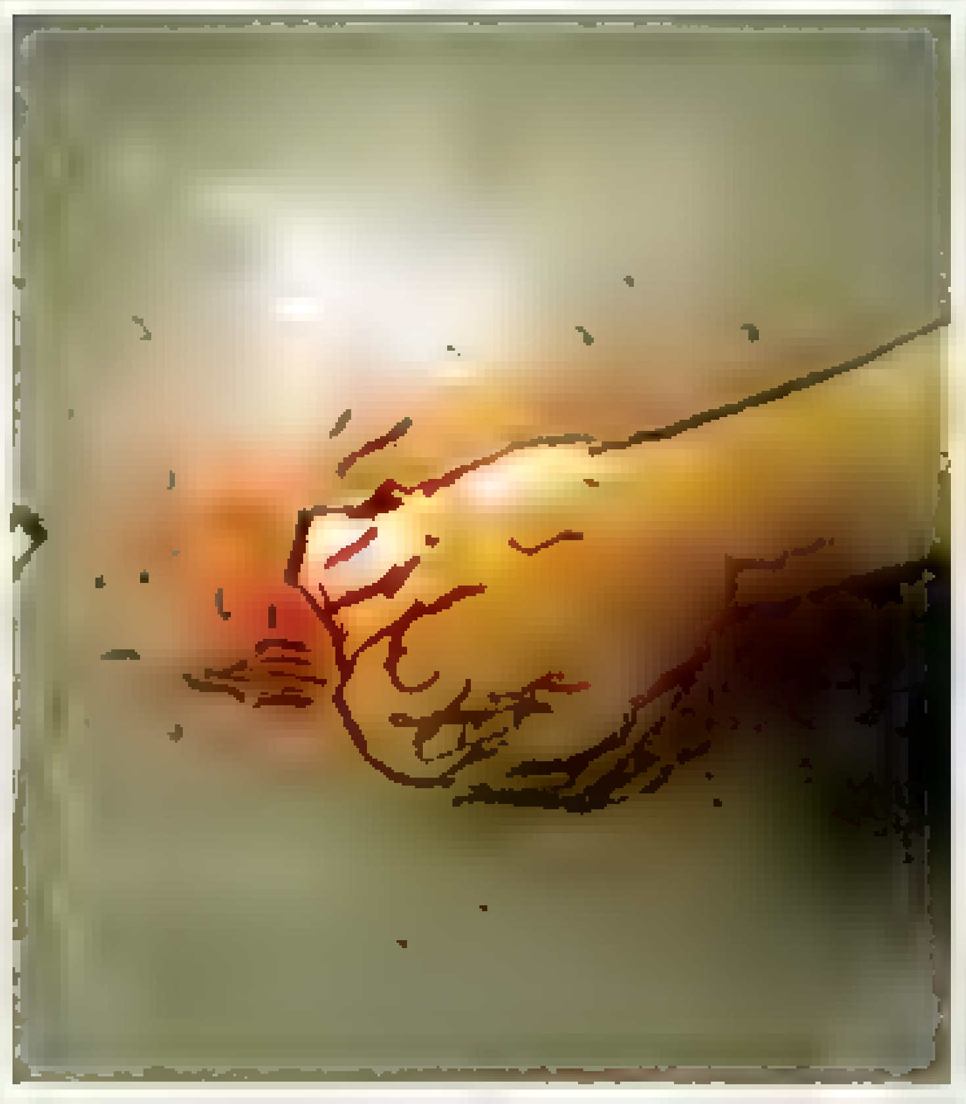
HE WAS INSIDE, THE VAMPIRE I WAS TRACKING, AND HE HAD SOME FRIENDS.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT...
I'VE SEEN A LOT OF CRAZY SHIT IN MY LIFE, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES TOGETHER, LET ALONE THE OTHER MONSTERS WITH THEM.
MONSTERS DON'T MIX.
THEY'RE AN EXCLUSIVE LOT, WITH THEIR OWN ITINERARIES--NAMELY KILLING PEOPLE.
THAT STRANGE FEELING QUICKLY GAVE WAY TO A SUPERCHARGE RUSH OF ADRENALINE.
I PROBABLY SHOULDA BEEN MORE FRIGHTENED, BUT ALL I COULD THINK WAS WHAT A HUGE HAUL I HAD IN FRONT OF ME.
WE'LL CALL THAT BAD MOVE NUMBER *THREE.*

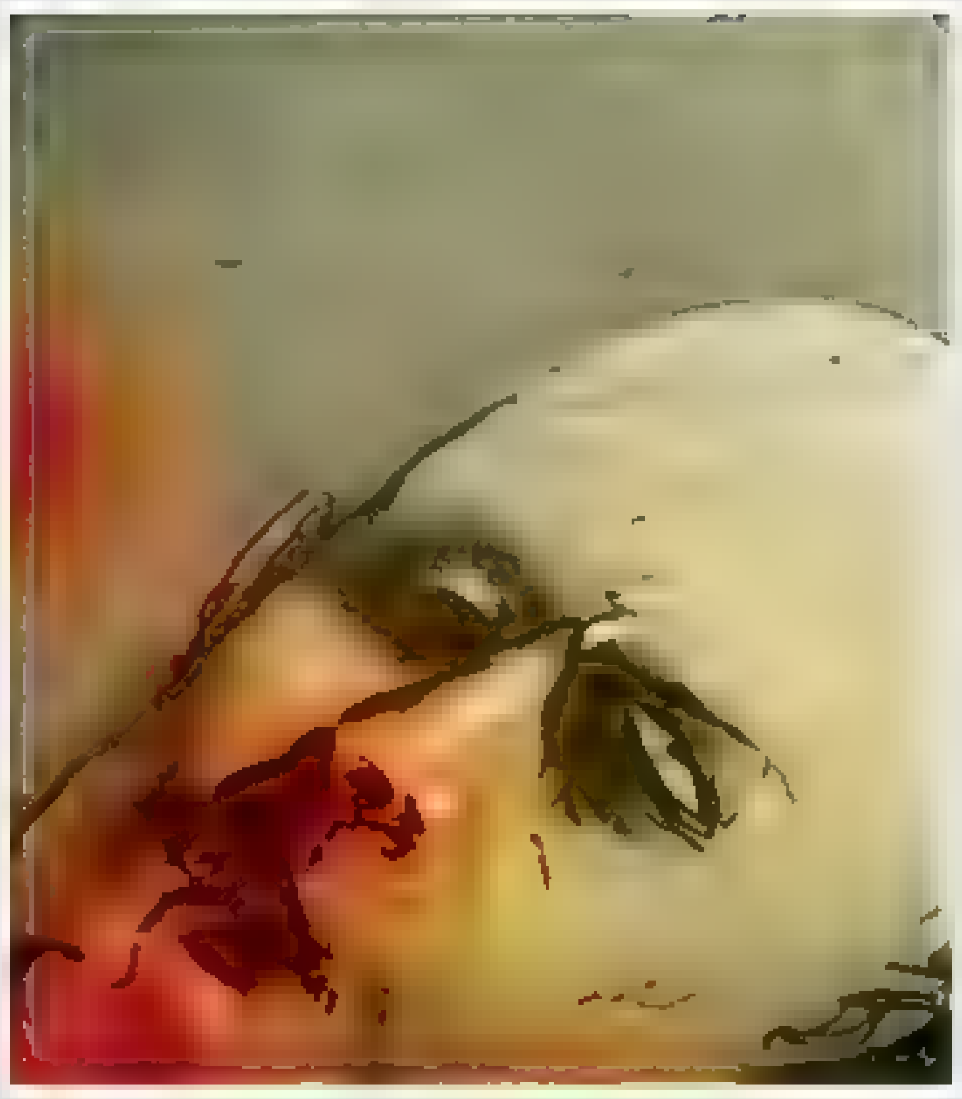
BUT THEN I REALIZED THERE WAS AN *ODDER* ADDITION TO THE GATHERING.
IF YOU'RE ALL *SETTLED*, I SHALL REVEAL THE REASON I'VE ASKED YOU ALL HERE TONIGHT.
...A HUMAN?! *WITH MONSTERS?*
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE HAD, AND I DIDN'T CARE. VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES WAS BAD ENOUGH. IT WAS ALL I NEEDED TO SEE.
IT'S *RIDICULOUS*. WHAT *PROOF* DO YOU HAVE?!
PLEASE. PLEASE. YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN.
LET'S HEAR THE MAN OUT.
IF HE'S RIGHT, NOTHING COULD STOP US--
CLICK-CLICK-CHUNKKK
HUH?
DON'T STOP ON *MY* ACCOUNT. I'M DYING TO HEAR WHAT THIS LITTLE TUPPERWARE PARTY'S ALL ABOUT.
CHECK... BAD MOVE NUMBER *FOUR*.

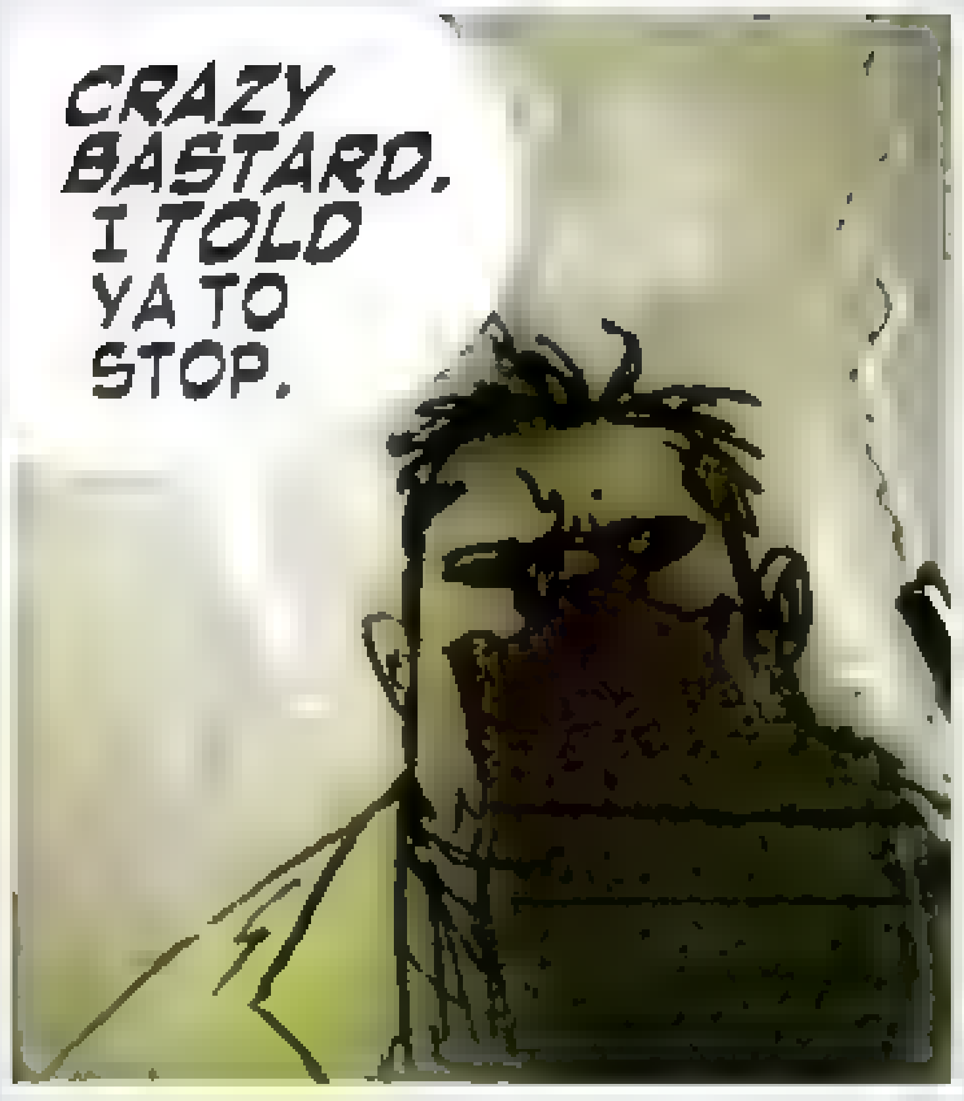
ARRRROOOO
KA-BLAMM
I'M OUTTA HERE!
WELL... COME AND GET IT.
BLAM
splat
YOUR BUDDY TOOK OFF. THE REST ARE *DEAD.* TELL ME WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON HERE OR *YOU'LL* BE JOINING THEM.
THE FUTURE STUPID
DON'T DO IT. DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT IT.
SPECULATOR MAGAZINE
LA DICK DECAPITATES DASTARDLY DEMON!
SPECULATOR MAGAZINE
LA DICK DECAPITATES DASTARDLY DEMON!

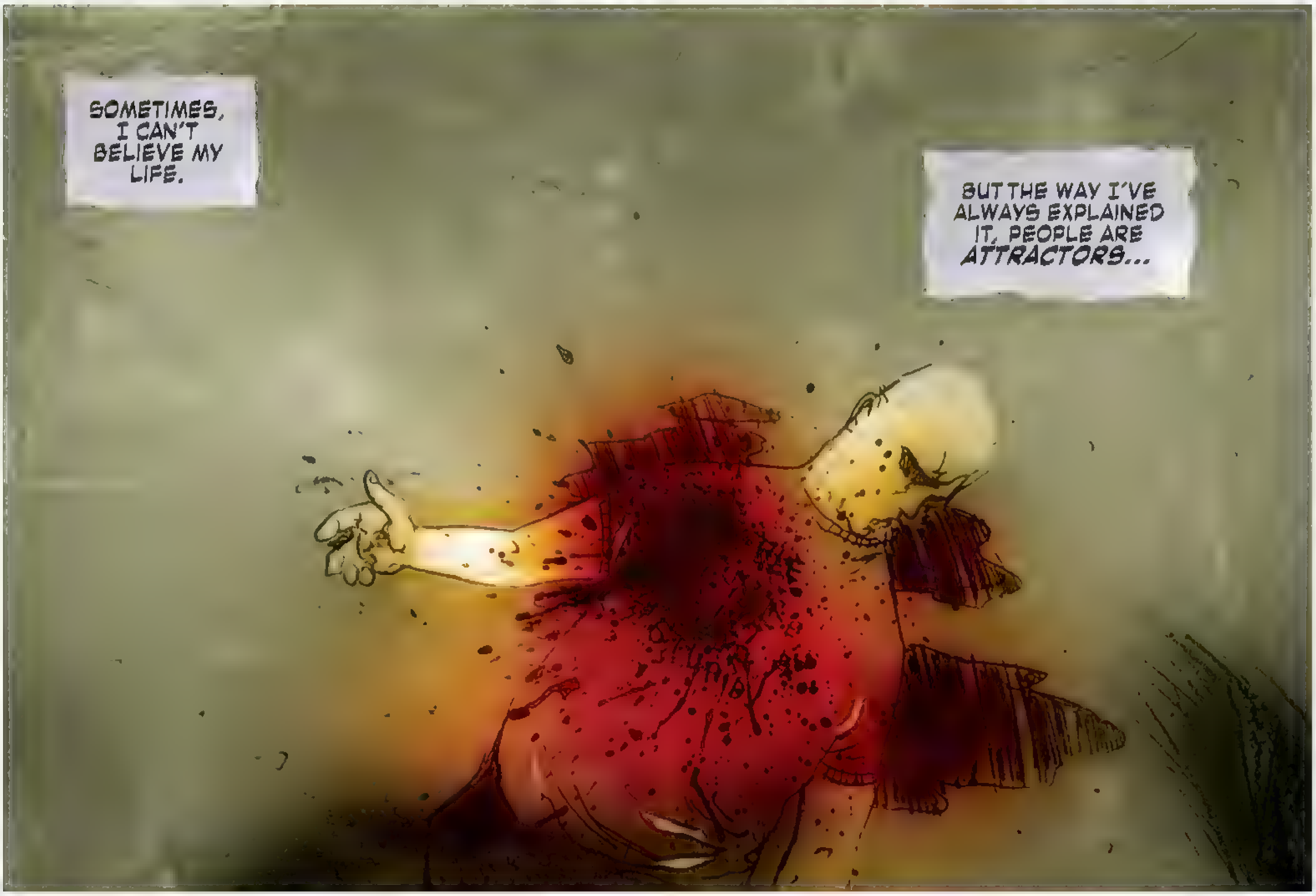
A LITTLE AHEAD OF *SCHEDULE*, I SUPPOSE-- BUT THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT, EH?
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR *MIND?!* FREEZE *RIGHT* WHERE YOU ARE.
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I HAD HIM IN MY SIGHTS AND MY FINGER ON THE TRIGGER, BUT HE KEPT MOVING FOR THE GUN.
FOR ONCE IT WAS TIME FOR *SOMEONE ELSE* TO MAKE THE WRONG MOVE.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
AT LEAST THAT'S THE WAY IT APPEARED.
BUT IF THERE'S ONE CLICHÉ THAT ALWAYS SEEMS TO CREEP INTO MY LIFE...
...IT'S *NOTHING* IS *EVER* WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE AT FIRST GLANCE.

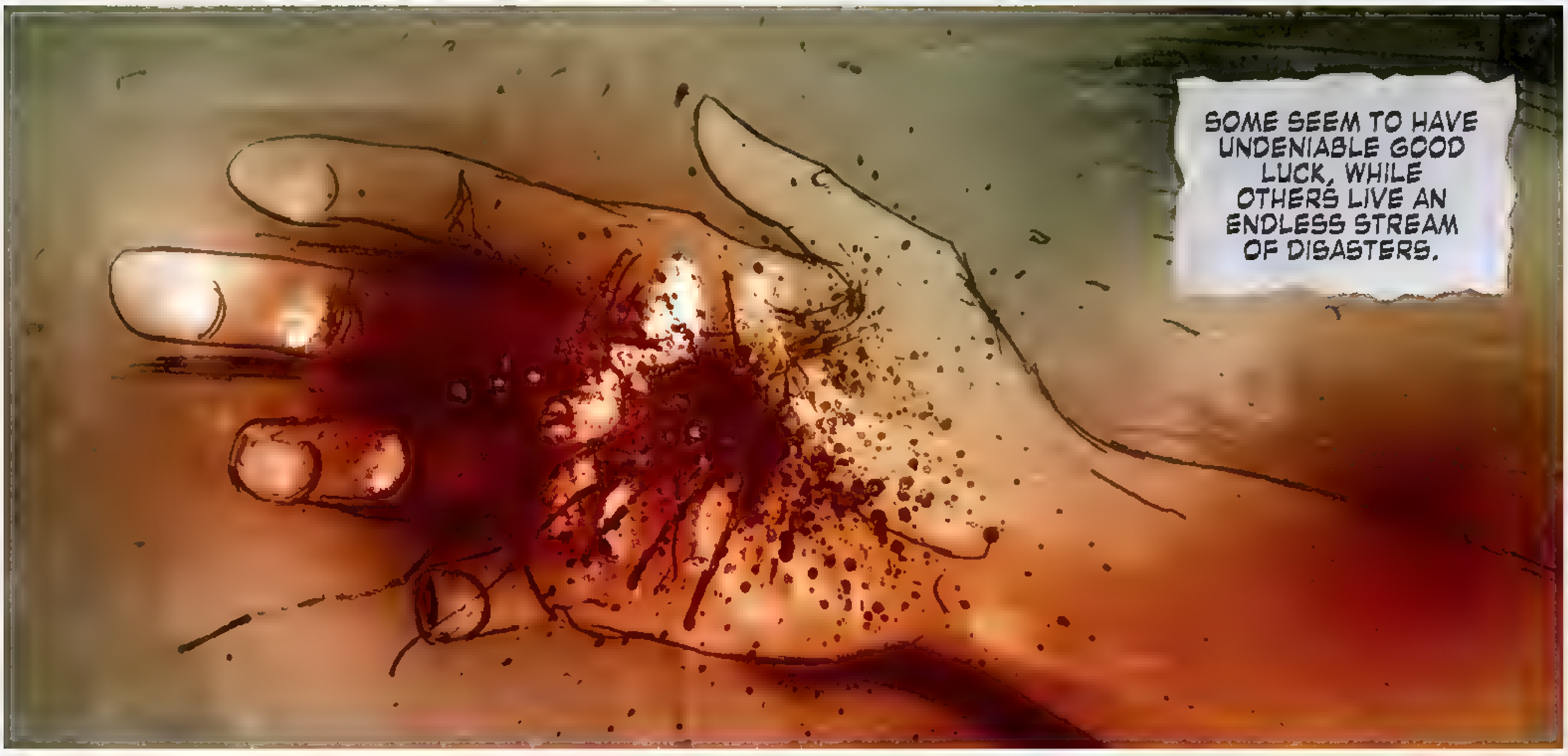







CRAZY BASTARD. I TOLD YA TO STOP.


SOMETIMES, I CAN'T BELIEVE MY LIFE.
BUT THE WAY I'VE ALWAYS EXPLAINED IT, PEOPLE ARE *ATTRACTORS...*


SOME SEEM TO HAVE UNDENIABLE GOOD LUCK, WHILE OTHERS LIVE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF DISASTERS.

SOME ATTRACT LOVE, MONEY, GOOD FORTUNE... *BAD* FORTUNE.
AND SOME PEOPLE ATTRACT THE *BIZARRE.*
I'VE ALWAYS FIT INTO THE LAST GROUP.
BUT NOTHING COULD PREPARE ME FOR THE MESS I WAS ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE.
WHAT THE HELL?
SOON I'D WISH I HAD NEVER HEARD THE WORD *MONSTER.*
Somewhere else. A few weeks later.
THE ROCKWELL INSTITUTE OF INFECTIOUS AND DEADLY DISEASES
click clack click clack

beep
beep
beep
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
HSSSSS
BUB1349

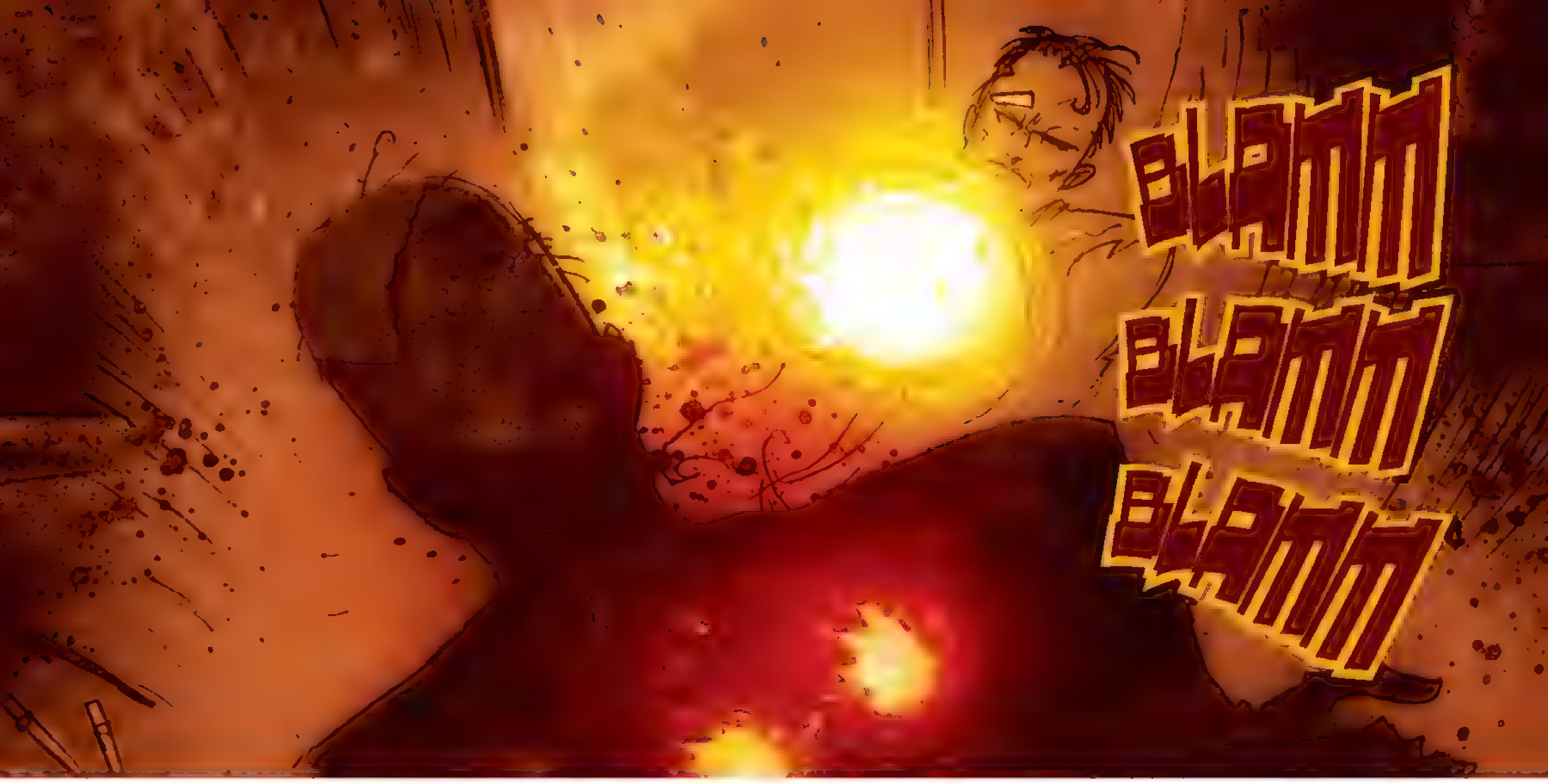
O ENTRY
THAT *YOU*, DR. HAGGERTY?
RRRRRRRRRR
AAAAHHHHH

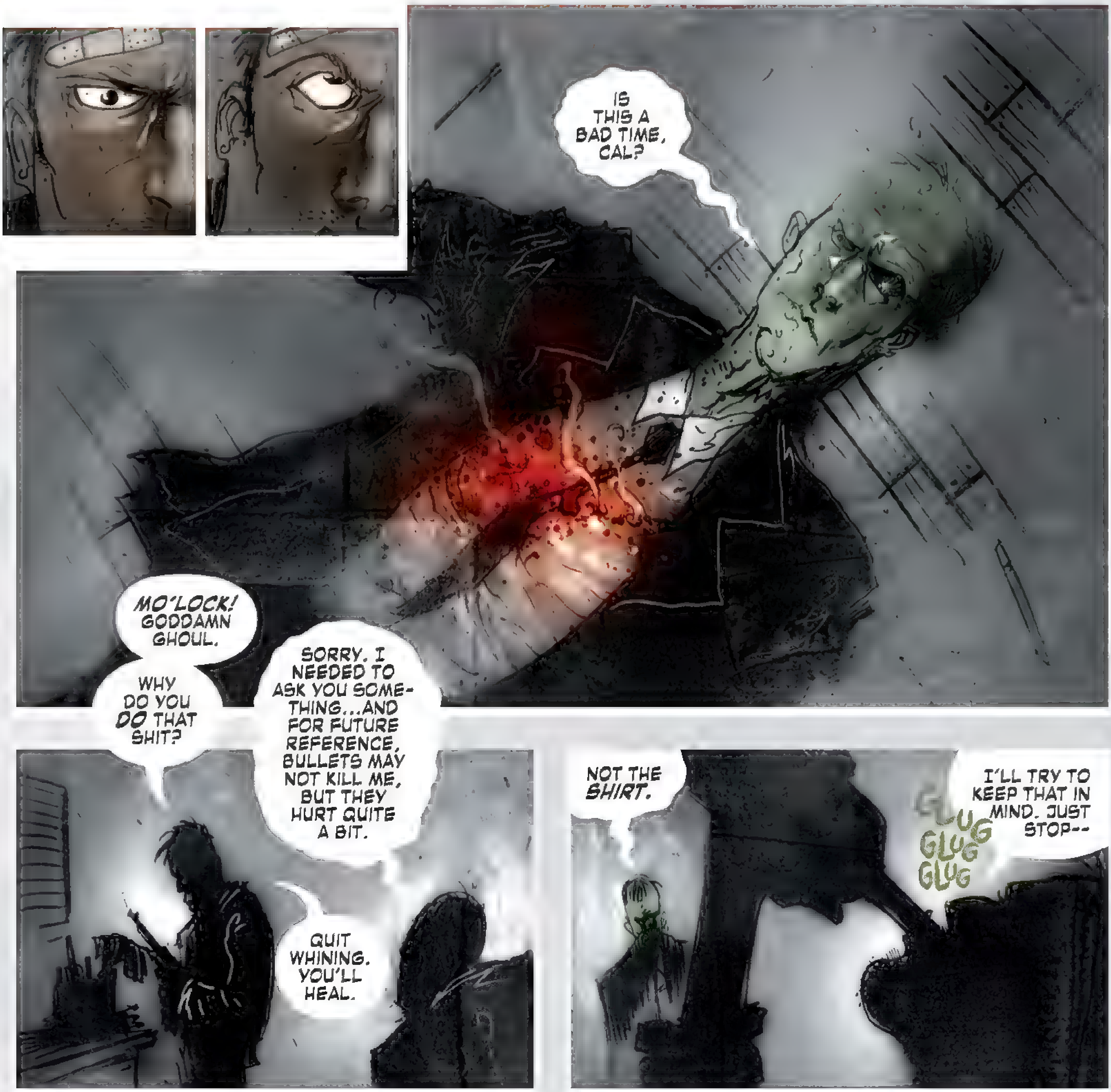
EJECT
CLICK
faint!
EXIT
LAB
408
→

THE ROCKWELL INSTITUTE OF INFECTIO
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POL
--AND ITS *HAIR* COVERED EVERYWHERE. ITS TEETH WERE LIKE--
GRAAAA!
HERE'S THE LIST YOU ASKED FOR, MISS BRUEGER.
THAT'S *DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT* BRUEGER. THAT'S ALL THAT WAS TAKEN?
YES--NEAR AS I CAN TELL, EVERYTHING *ELSE* IS WHERE I LEFT IT.
WHAT'S *BUB1349?*
IT'S A RARE STRAIN OF BUBONIC PLAGUE THAT--
PLAGUE!?
IT'S A RARE STRAIN THAT HAS *NEVER* BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO ANY RECORDED DEATHS SINCE IT INITIALLY BROKE OUT IN--
A SMALL EUROPEAN VILLAGE BETWEEN 1337 AND 1350 WHEN THE *BLACK DEATH* MAXED OUT.

LIKE HE SAID, NO DEATHS WERE EVER ATTRIBUTED TO THIS STRAIN...
...BUT *SOME* SAY AN ENTIRE TOWN'S POPULATION DISAPPEARED.
THAT'S A *LEGEND*, ANYWAY.
SOMETIMES THE *LEGENDS* TEACH US MORE THAN *TEXTBOOKS*, POINDEXTER.
YOU RANG, DETECTIVE BRUEGER?
YEAH... WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR *HEAD?*
I HAD A LITTLE *DISAGREEMENT* WITH SOME PEOPLE AT A BAR LAST NIGHT.
SOME PEOPLE?
PRETTY MUCH *EVERYBODY*. FORGET IT. WHAT'S UP?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW, BUT WHEN I HEARD THE NIGHT WATCHMAN BABBLING LIKE A *CRAZY MAN*, I THOUGHT OF YOU RIGHT AWAY.
LAB-36B
WHAT'S THE RUNDOWN?
AROUND *FOUR A.M.*, BETWEEN TWO AND FOUR PERPS WEARING *ANIMAL COSTUMES* BROKE INTO THE LAB, AND STOLE A CANISTER WITH SAMPLES OF THAT *SUB-WHATEVER-THE-CRAP*. THEY ATTACKED THE NIGHT WATCHMAN, SWIPED THE SECURITY TAPE, AND DISAPPEARED. THE PERPS USED SECURITY CODES TO ACCESS THE LAB...
...AND THAT'S ALL WE HAVE. THAT AND WHAT THE GUARD SAYS.
AND WHAT'S *THAT?*
HE *SAYS* THEY WEREN'T WEARING COSTUMES. THAT HE WAS ATTACKED BY SOME KIND OF...*CREATURE*, COVERED WITH FUR LIKE A DOG, AND--
WEREWOLF. SEEMS OBVIOUS, BUT IT DOESN'T FIT.
HERE WE GO!
THERE'S NO *WAY* WEREWOLVES DID THIS. FOR STARTERS, THE GUARD WOULD BE DEAD. *TWO*, WEREWOLVES DON'T *STEAL*. THEY *HUNT*. NOTHING ORGANIZED LIKE THIS.
WHY DO I *LISTEN* TO YOU? DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU *SOUND* LIKE?
ALL I *KNOW* IS *YOU* KEEP CALLING *ME*. THANKS FOR THE TOUR.
HAVE YOUR *LAB BOYS* RUN SOME OF THAT HAIR OVER ON THE FLOOR THAT THEY SEEMED TO HAVE MISSED.
WHILE THEY'RE *AT* IT, THEY MIGHT WANT TO LOOK AT THE SCRATCH MARKS ON THOSE DRAWERS. IF THE PERPS WERE WEARING *COSTUMES*, THEY HAD SOME PRETTY SHARP CLAWS.

Studio City.
NO
SON OF A BITCH.
BROKEN PLEASE KNOCK.
BROKEN PLEASE KNOCK


BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM


IS THIS A BAD TIME, CAL?
MO'LOCK! GODDAMN GHOUL.
WHY DO YOU *DO* THAT SHIT?
SORRY. I NEEDED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING...AND FOR FUTURE REFERENCE, BULLETS MAY NOT KILL ME, BUT THEY HURT QUITE A BIT.
QUIT WHINING. YOU'LL HEAL.
NOT THE *SHIRT*.
GLUG GLUG GLUG
I'LL TRY TO KEEP THAT IN MIND. JUST STOP--

FORGET IT. WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAD TO BREAK INTO MY PLACE?
THERE IS TROUBLE AMONG MY BRETHREN.
WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
WHAT ARE THOSE?
ASPIRIN, CODEINE, EPHEDRINE, AND SOMETHING I FOUND ON THE SIDEWALK. KEEP TALKING.
glug glug glug
I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY THE CITY'S GHOULS TO REQUEST YOUR ASSISTANCE. THERE HAS BEEN AN ATTACK. WOULD YOU MIND ACCOMPANYING ME TO THE UNDERGROUND?
THE SEWERS? WHY DOES IT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE IN THE SEWERS?! I'M SICK AND FUCKING TIRED OF TRAIPSING AROUND IN SHIT AND SLIME.
PLEASE, CAL. INEXPLICABLE THINGS ARE HAPPENING. WE NEED YOUR HELP. I NEED YOUR HELP.
I'M STAYING RIGHT HERE. I'M WORKING ON A BUZZ. I DESERVE A DECENT BUZZ. I'M NOT GOING TO THE FUCKING SEWERS. PERIOD.

...AND THE NIGHT WATCHMAN SAYS IT WAS WEREWOLVES WHO ROBBED THE PLACE, BUT--
I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF LYCANTHROPES STEALING BEFORE, LET ALONE ACTING AS A GROUP. IT GOES AGAINST THEIR SOLITARY HUNTER NATURE. IT HAS BEEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS SINCE THEY RAN IN PACKS.
THIS IS WHAT I'M SAYING! IT MAKES NO ***SENSE!*** BUT I *DID* SEE SCRATCHES AND HAIR THAT COULD MATCH A WEREWOLF.
PERHAPS IT WAS THIEVES WEARING COSTUMES?
YEAH, THUGS IN DOG SUITS. THAT'S BRUEGER'S THEORY. WHY WOULD ANYBODY DO SOMETHING SO STUPID?
I PUT NOTHING PAST HUMANS.
THIS WAY.
ME FIRST. I WANNA WATCH YOUR ***ASS WIGGLE*** AS YOU GO DOWN.

YEAH, *THAT'S* THE STUFF. SHAKE IT, DEAD BOY.
YOU ARE INEBRIATED... PERHAPS IT IS ANOTHER FORM OF SHAPE SHIFTER, OR A NEW SPECIES THAT WE HAVE YET TO ENCOUNTER?
NICE PLACE. I LOVE THE WAY THE *SHIT* ACCENTS THE GUNK!
THIS WAY.
Tap Tap
IT'S ABOUT TIME. EVERYBODY HAS ARRIVED.
YIKES.

Los Angeles.
The sewers.
I THINK YOU KNOW EVERYBODY HERE.
UH-HUH. SO WHAT'S GOING ON? I DON'T HAVE ALL DAY TO BE HANGING AROUND THE FUCKING SEWERS WITH A BUNCH OF GHOULS.
WE HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU, CAL MCDONALD. SOMETHING THAT MAY SHOCK AND DISTURB YOU.

CHRIST, CUT THE MELODRAMA AND SHOW ME. I THINK I CAN HANDLE THE SHOCK.
CAL MCDONALD...
EMEK?!
HOLY SHIT! WHAT HAPPENED? WHO DID THIS?
VAMPIRES.
EXCUSE ME?! YOU'RE GHOULS! YOUR BLOOD'S AS ROTTEN AS DAY-OLD PUKE.
THEY DID NOT FEED. THEY JUST ATTACKED HIM.

THEY?
THERE WERE FOUR.
WHAT?! TOGETHER?! VAMPIRES KICKED A GHOUL'S ASS?!
DID YOU KNOW THEM? HAD YOU EVER SEEN THEM BEFORE?
ONE OF THEM I RECOGNIZED. I HAVE SEEN HIM AROUND. THE OTHER THREE WERE STRANGERS TO ME.
DID THEY SAY ANYTHING?
THEY SAID TO STAY AWAY FROM THE SEWERS. SAID THAT GHOULS WERE INFERIOR TO THEM, AND THAT WE SHOULD LEAVE THE CITY WHILE THERE WAS STILL TIME.
THEY ATTACKED HIM IN OUR SEWERS. BEAT HIM AND WARNED HIM TO STAY OUT OF THE SEWERS! OUR SEWERS!
IT'S AN ACT OF WAR!
THEY ARE AFTER OUR TERRITORY!

AND THERE IT WAS. JUST WHEN I THOUGHT THINGS COULDN'T GET ANY WEIRDER, THEY DID, AND I STILL COULDN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF IT.
WEREWOLVES WERE TAKING UP THEFT, AND NOW VAMPIRES WERE BEATING THE CRAP OUT OF GHOULS. VAMPIRES KILL FOR FOOD, SAME AS WEREWOLVES.
THIS STEALING-AND-BEATING THING JUST DIDN'T ADD UP.
I WAS FAKING IT. I WAS A BLIND MAN FEELING AROUND IN THE DARK, AND I HAD NO IDEA HOW MUCH DARKER IT WAS ABOUT TO GET.
I SAY WE HIT THEM BACK!
WHOA, WHOA, CHECK THAT SHIT RIGHT NOW! THIS IS WEIRD, I ADMIT THAT, BUT LET'S NOT GO OFF HALF-COCKED. GIVE ME A CHANCE TO LOOK INTO THINGS FIRST. SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON, BUT--
Budda-beep-
STUPID FUCKING BEEPER--
Budda-beep-

NORMAN?
I DON'T SUPPOSE ANYBODY HAS A PHONE DOWN HERE?
FIGURES.
NORMAN. CAL MCDONALD. WHAT'S--
HELP ME, CAL--HE SENT THEM HERE...OH MY GOD, HELP ME--
SLOW DOWN, NORM. TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON.
THEY'RE HERE! THEY FOUND ME! HELP MEEEE--
NORMAN!
I GOTTA GO TO THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM.

NORMAN PERKINS WAS A PAL OF MINE.
NATURA HISTORY MUSEU OF LOS ANGE
HE WAS AN ALL-STAR STRANGE FUCK.
AND I MEAN THAT IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY.
NORMAN WAS A RENOWNED ENTOMOLOGIST.
YOU KNOW, NORMAN WAS INTO BUGS AND SHIT.
PEOPLE'D BE AMAZED AT THE CROSSOVER BETWEEN INSECTS AND MONSTERS, BUT THEY'RE A LOT ALIKE--MYSTERIOUS AND UNCHANGED OVER THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
SO NOW NORMAN CALLS ME FOR HELP.
bingo
I'M THERE AND INSIDE IN NO TIME FLAT.

IT'S DEAD FUCKING QUIET.
CRASH!
BANG!
KEEP AWAY--
AAAAHHHHH!
NORMAN?!
BUG BOY

AW... FUCKING HELL.
JESUS... NORMAN.
THAT TORE IT: THE TOP OF MY HEAD SHOULD HAVE EXPLODED ALL OVER THE ROOM. WEREWOLVES STEALING. VAMPIRES MUGGING, AND NOW THIS.
THE WHOLE GODDAMN ENCHILADA TOGETHER IN ONE ROOM WITH A ZOMBIE THROWN IN FOR SPICE. SOMETHING VERY STRANGE WAS GOING ON, AND IT TOOK THIS MANY CLUES FOR IT TO SINK THROUGH MY THICK SKULL.

OKAY, EVERYBODY FREEZE. DON'T MOVE, YOU MURDERING FREAKS.
YEAH, RIGHT. GET HIM!
OH, PLEASE.
CLICK-CLICK!
BLAM!
THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.

SERIOUSLY, I'LL GIVE YOU ONE MORE, BUT THAT'S IT.
RAAAARHH!
IS THAT WITH THREE A'S OR FOUR?
ARRRGHAAH!
SNAP!
GODDAMMIT!
ROTUNDA
SECOND FLOOR
BALCONY

SLAM
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
OKAY, PLAN! NEED A PLAN!
CRASH
RAAAARHH!
WHOA!
RRRIIIP
AAAAHHHH!!

HA!

...JUST... GOTTA... GET...
GOING SOME-WHERE?
AAAHHH!!
KRASH!
HA-HA-HA!
THINK THAT'S FUNNY?
I'LL SHOW YOU FUNNY.
HISSSSSSS
PLAN B...
SEE YA!
HSSSSS
SSSS
RUN IF YOU LIKE, HUMAN.
THE BLOOD IS ALWAYS SWEETER WHEN IT'S HEATED.

MAMMAL EXHIBIT ROOM
YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME IN HERE, HUMAN.
BANGG!
DAAAAH!!
THAT WAS FOR KNOCKING ME INTO THE SQUID.
AND THIS IS FOR THAT STUPID "SWEET BLOOD" COMMENT.
CLICK
SHIT.
AAAARGH!

I COULD BARELY MOVE MY LEFT ARM, AND BOTH LEGS FELT BROKEN.
LUCKILY I HAD A FEW VICODIN IN THE SAME POCKET AS MY EXTRA SHELLS.
LIKE I SAID, YOU CAN KILL A VAMPIRE WITH A BULLET.
EXIT
BUT YOU BETTER DAMN WELL BE SURE YOUR GUN'S LOADED.
EXIT
SON OF A--
SOMETIMES THOUGH...
BANG!
...IT'S MORE FUN TO IMPROVISE.
PANG!
SNAP!

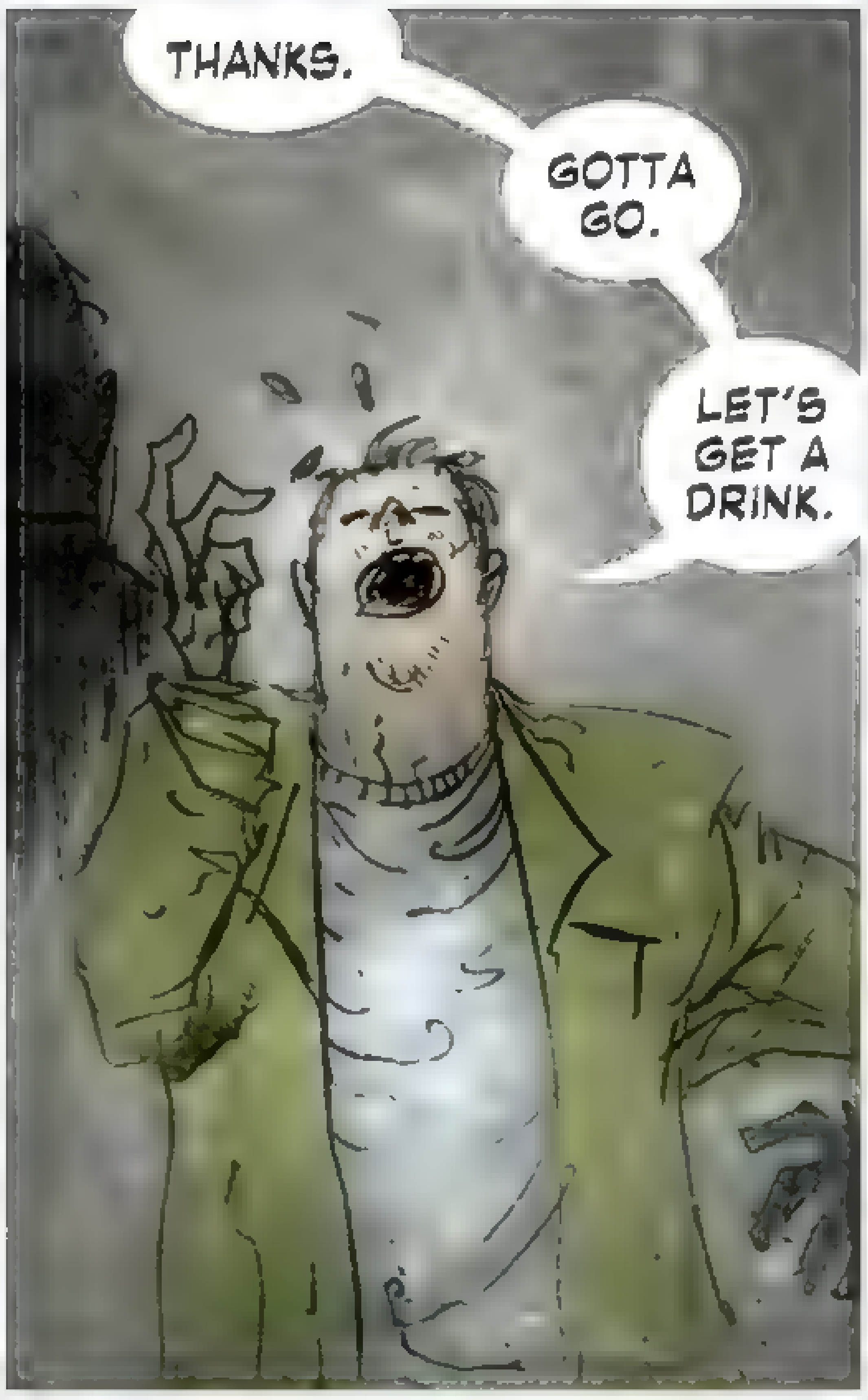
KRUUUUUNNCH!
AAIIIEE!
WELL, YOU DON'T SEE THAT EVERY DAY.
EOOOOEOOOOOOEOOOOOOO
WHEW!
FREEZE! POLICE!
NOBODY MOVE.
PERFECT.

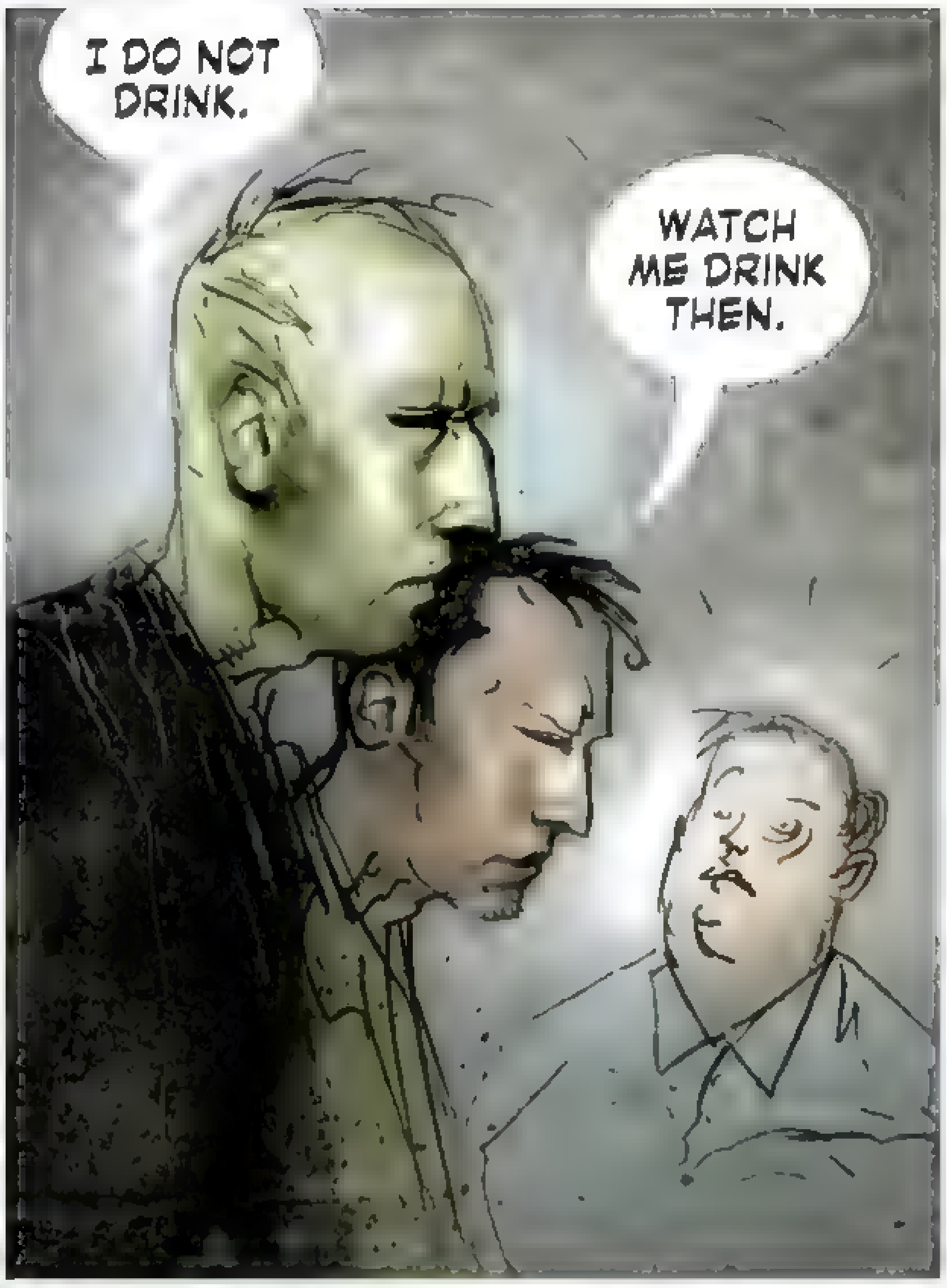
CAL? CAN YOU HEAR ME?!
CAL? CAN YOU HEAR ME?! IT'S ME, LT. BRUEGER! BLINK IF YOU CAN HEAR ME!
I'M UNCONSCIOUS. NOT RETARDED. QUIT TALKING AT ME.
YOU OKAY?
I'VE BEEN BETTER.
WANT TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MUSEUM?
WHAT'D YOU FIND?
A BUNCH OF VERY EXPENSIVE, HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT DISPLAYS BROKEN, A NAKED MAN STUCK ON THE TUSK OF AN ELEPHANT, AND AN ENTOMOLOGIST UPSTAIRS WITH A LETTER OPENER IN HIS BACK. RING ANY BELLS?
I GOT A CALL FROM NORMAN PERKINS. I USED TO DROP IN ON HIM WHEN I NEEDED HELP ON A CASE. HE KNEW ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BUGS. SMART GUY. REALLY SMART. HE COULD GIVE ME INFORMATION IN JUST ABOUT ANY AREA I NEEDED.
WHEN HE CALLED HE WAS IN TROUBLE, SO I WENT DOWN THERE TO CHECK IT OUT. WHEN I ARRIVED I FOUND NORMAN MURDERED, AND THREE GOONS ATTACKED ME. THE FIGHT SPILLED OUT INTO THE MUSEUM, AND THEN I WOKE UP HERE.
WHAT ABOUT THE DEAD NAKED GUY?
I THOUGHT HE WAS PART OF THE DISPLAY.
NOT FUNNY...SKIP IT. GET BACK TO THE FULL SCENARIO. I CAN TELL YOU'RE LYING. WHAT DID YOU LEAVE OUT?

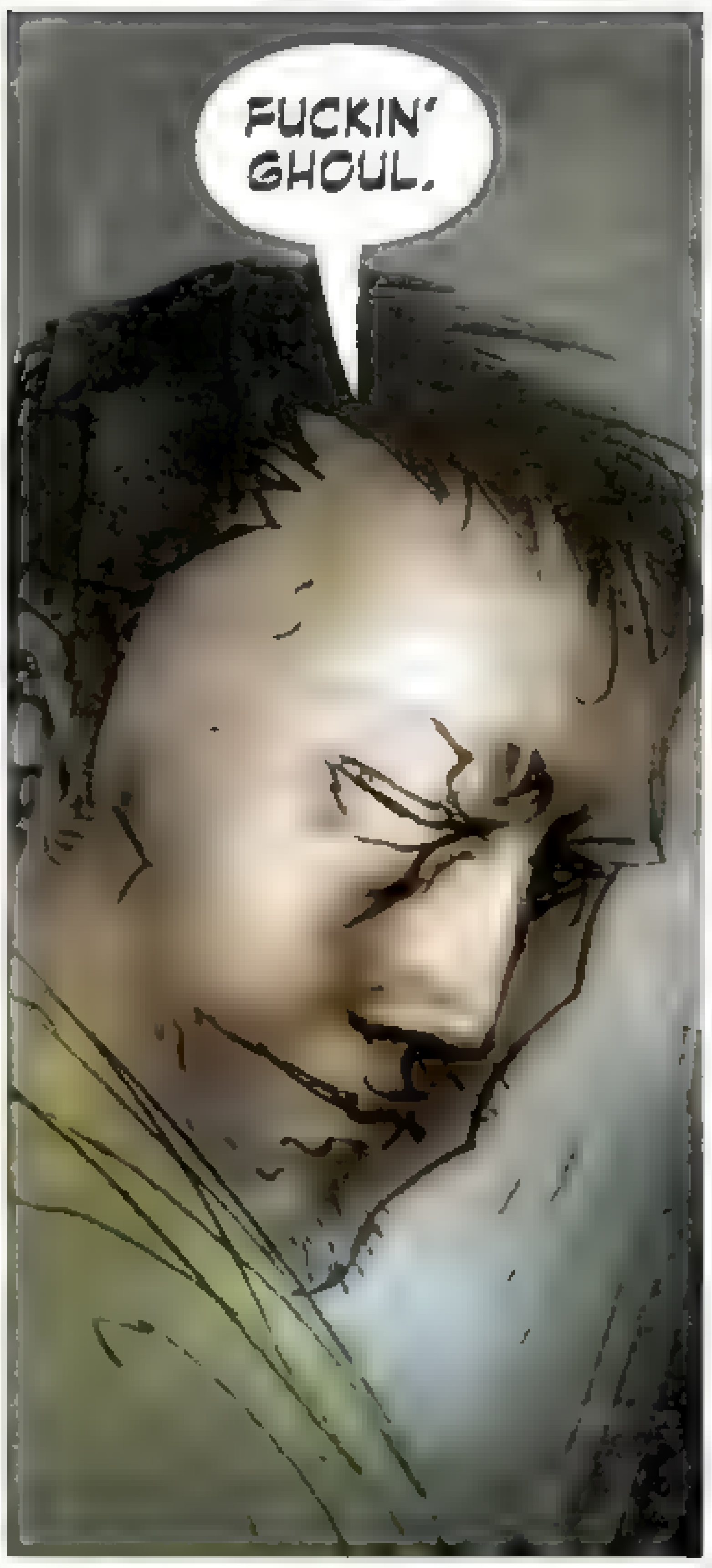
THE PART WHERE THE GOONS WERE A VAMPIRE, A WEREWOLF, AND A ZOMBIE.
CAL, PLEASE. I'M TRYING TO HELP YOU! DON'T FEED ME THIS SHIT AGAIN. YOU ARE IN DEEP, DEEP TROUBLE. THE D.A. WANTS YOU CHARGED WITH THE PERKINS MURDER AND THE MUSEUM IS GOING TO SUE YOU BLIND. PLEASE TELL ME THE TRUTH.
LET'S KEEP IT ON TERMS WE CAN BOTH DEAL WITH. THERE WERE THREE..."GOONS." IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THEY WERE. I WALKED IN ON THEM RANSACKING NORMAN'S OFFICE. THEY KILLED NORMAN.
PERKINS WAS IN CHARGE OF THE INSECT ZOO. WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT HIM DEAD?
NO REASON AT ALL. ANY LEADS ON THE ROCKWELL LAB BREAK-IN?
NOTHING. THE NIGHT WATCHMAN IS STICKING TO HIS WOLF-MAN STORY.
WEREWOLF?
SHUT UP.
JUST SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAVE A LOT OF NUTS CRYIN' WOLF. BRUEGER, I'VE NEVER LIED TO YOU BEFORE. GIVE ME A LITTLE TIME WITH THIS. I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET SOMETHING ON BOTH THESE CASES IF I HAVE THE CHANCE. CAN YOU KEEP THE HEAT OFF ME A WHILE?
I CAN STALL THE D.A. HE KNOWS YOU DIDN'T KILL ANYBODY. HE JUST WANTS TO SEE YOU SQUIRM. BUT YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN WITH THE MUSEUM PEOPLE.
FAIR ENOUGH. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I HAVE SOMETHING.

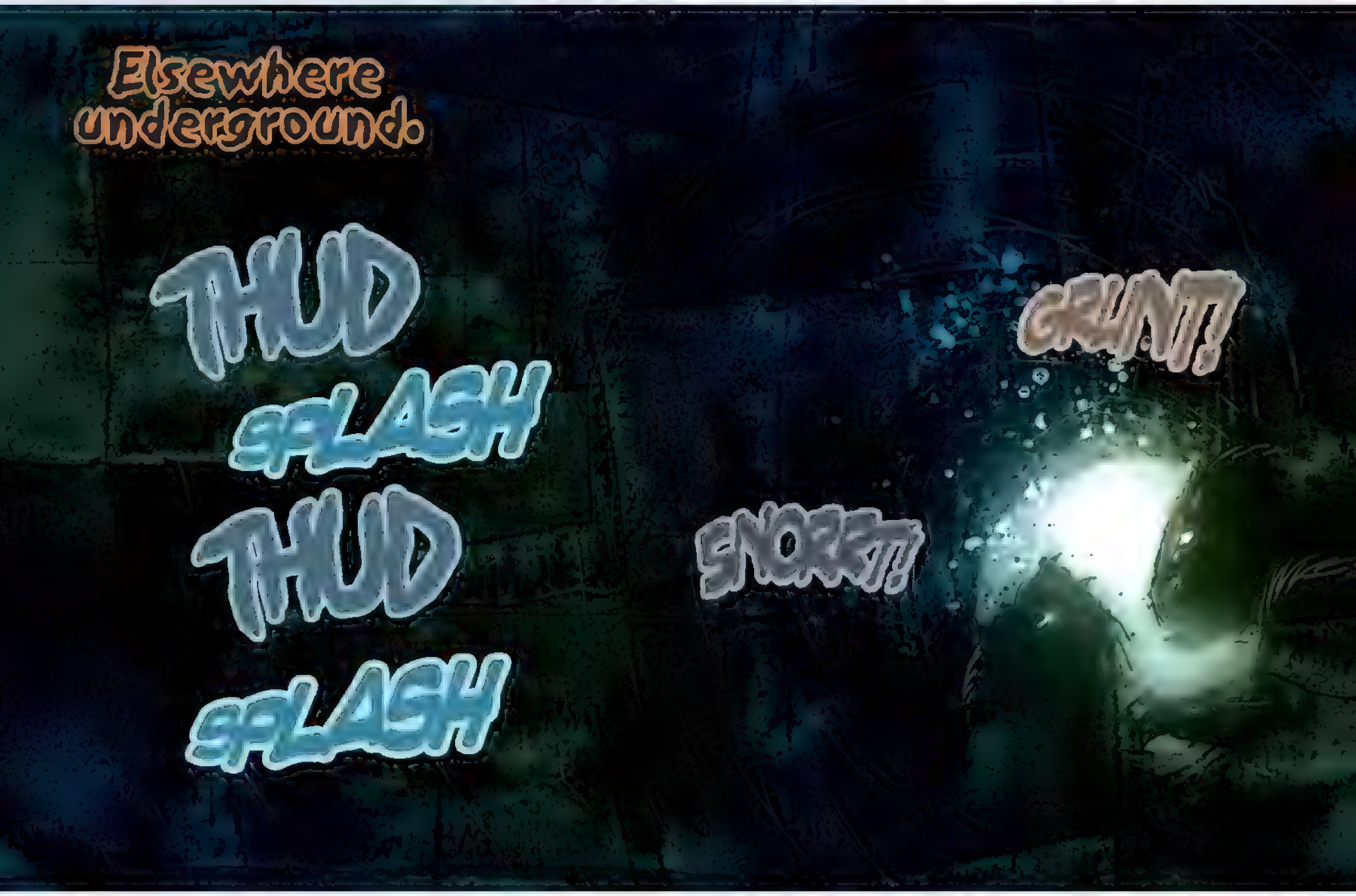
I'M GOING OUT ON A LIMB HERE, CAL, AND THIS IS THE LAST TIME. I WANT REAL ANSWERS. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY *SPOOKY* THIS OR *CREEPY* THAT, YOU UNDERSTAND? MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN. MY LAST GOOD NERVE HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY AND COMPLETELY WORKED.
MY BEDPAN'S FULL.
WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?
THERE'S SOME FREAK OUT HERE WANTS TO SEE MCDONALD.
LET 'IM IN.
LIEUTENANT BRUEGER.
HOW GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
BRRRR.

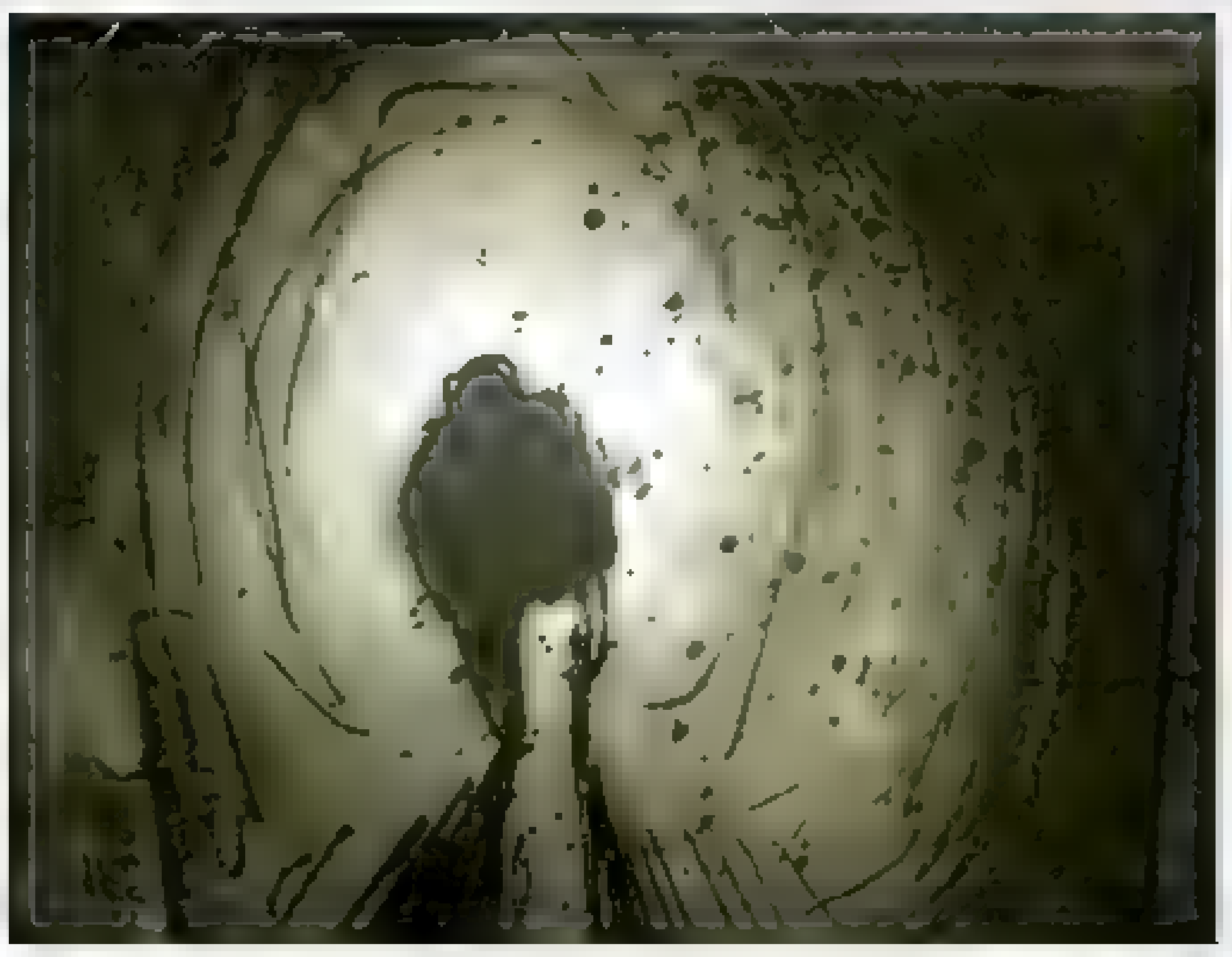
HOW DO YOU FEEL, CAL?
LIKE SHIT. HELP ME GET THIS THING OFF MY LEG.
THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE. FIRST, THE ROCKWELL INSTITUTE. WEREWOLVES STEALING PLAGUE SAMPLES. THEN YOUR GHOUL BUDDIES, ATTACKED BY VAMPIRES, NOT FOR BLOOD BUT TERRITORY. AND LAST NIGHT, NORMAN PERKINS, MURDERED BY THREE DIFFERENT SPECIES WORKING TOGETHER.
DID THEY RIP HIM TO SHREDS?
THEY STABBED HIM WITH A GODDAMN LETTER OPENER.
TRYING TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A HUMAN-ON-HUMAN MURDER.
EXACTLY. I THINK ALL THREE OF THESE INCIDENTS COULD BE RELATED. I THINK MONSTERS ARE ORGANIZING.
ORGANIZING?
YOU REMEMBER WHEN I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT MONSTER RALLY I BUSTED?
YES, I RECALL THERE WAS A HUMAN PRESENT. YOU KILLED HIM.
MAYBE THAT GUY, WHOEVER HE WAS, STARTED SOMETHING THAT THE OTHERS DECIDED TO FINISH.
MR. MCDONALD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF BED?! I HAVE YOUR MEDICATIONS--

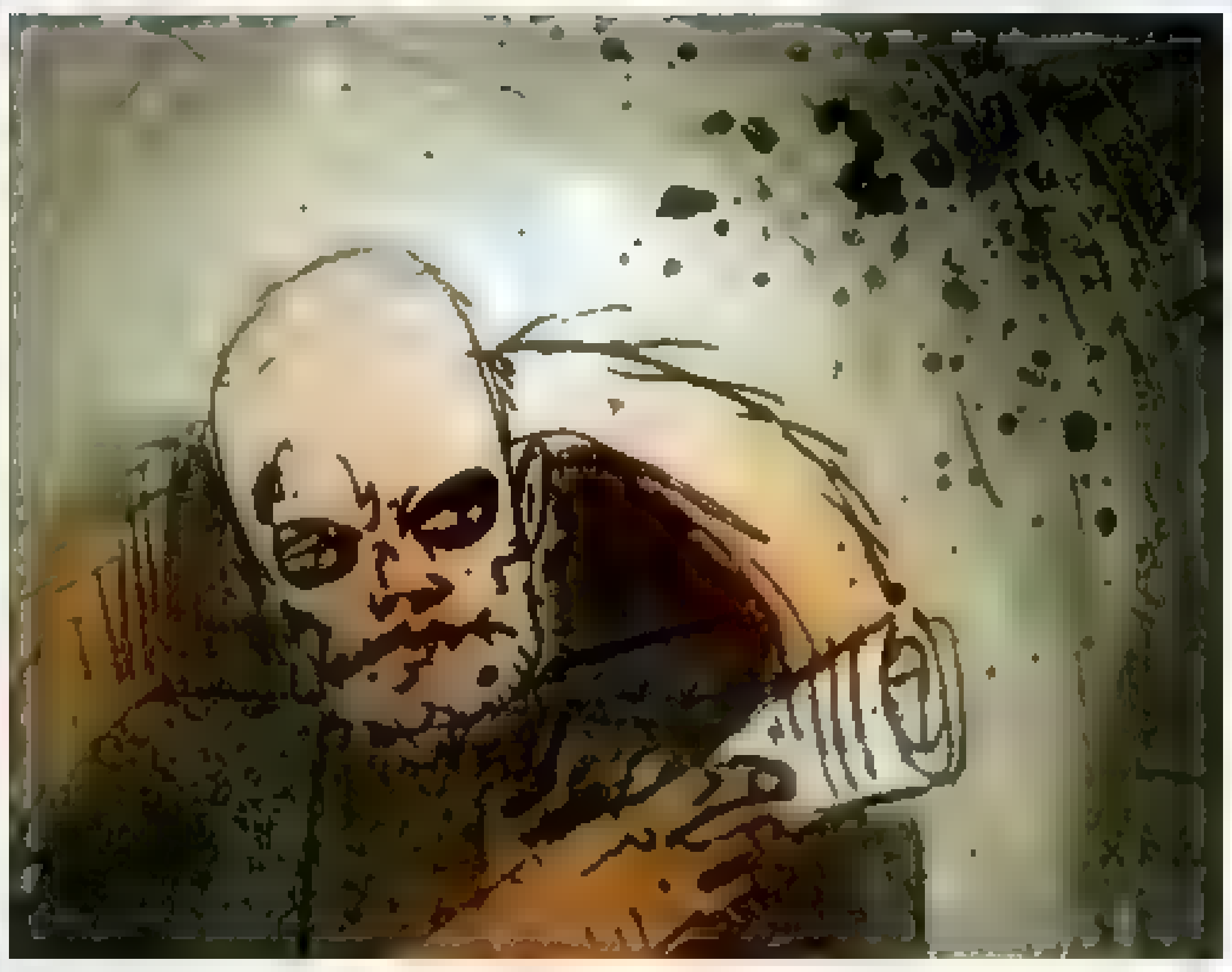

THANKS.
GOTTA GO.
LET'S GET A DRINK.

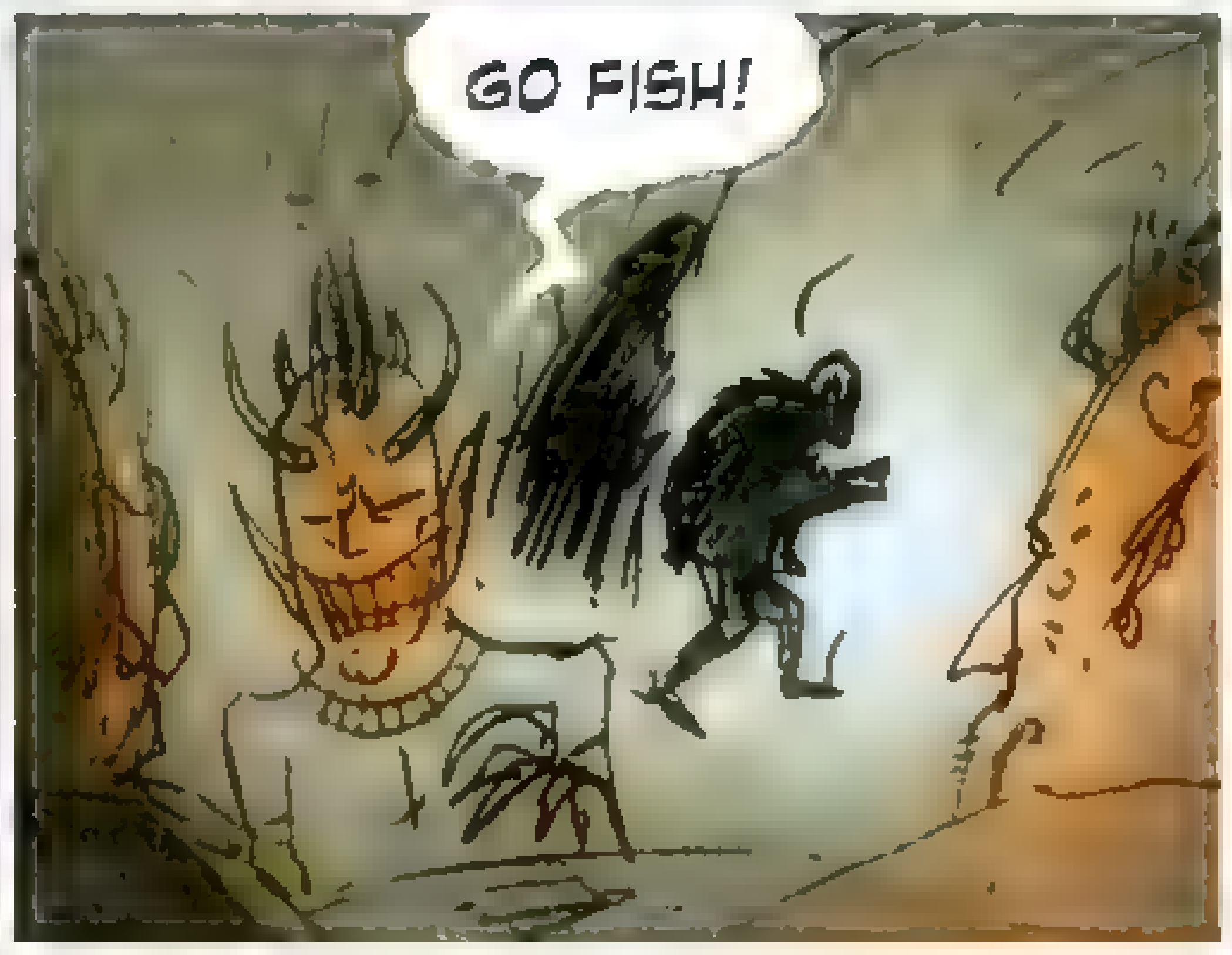

I DO NOT DRINK.
WATCH ME DRINK THEN.

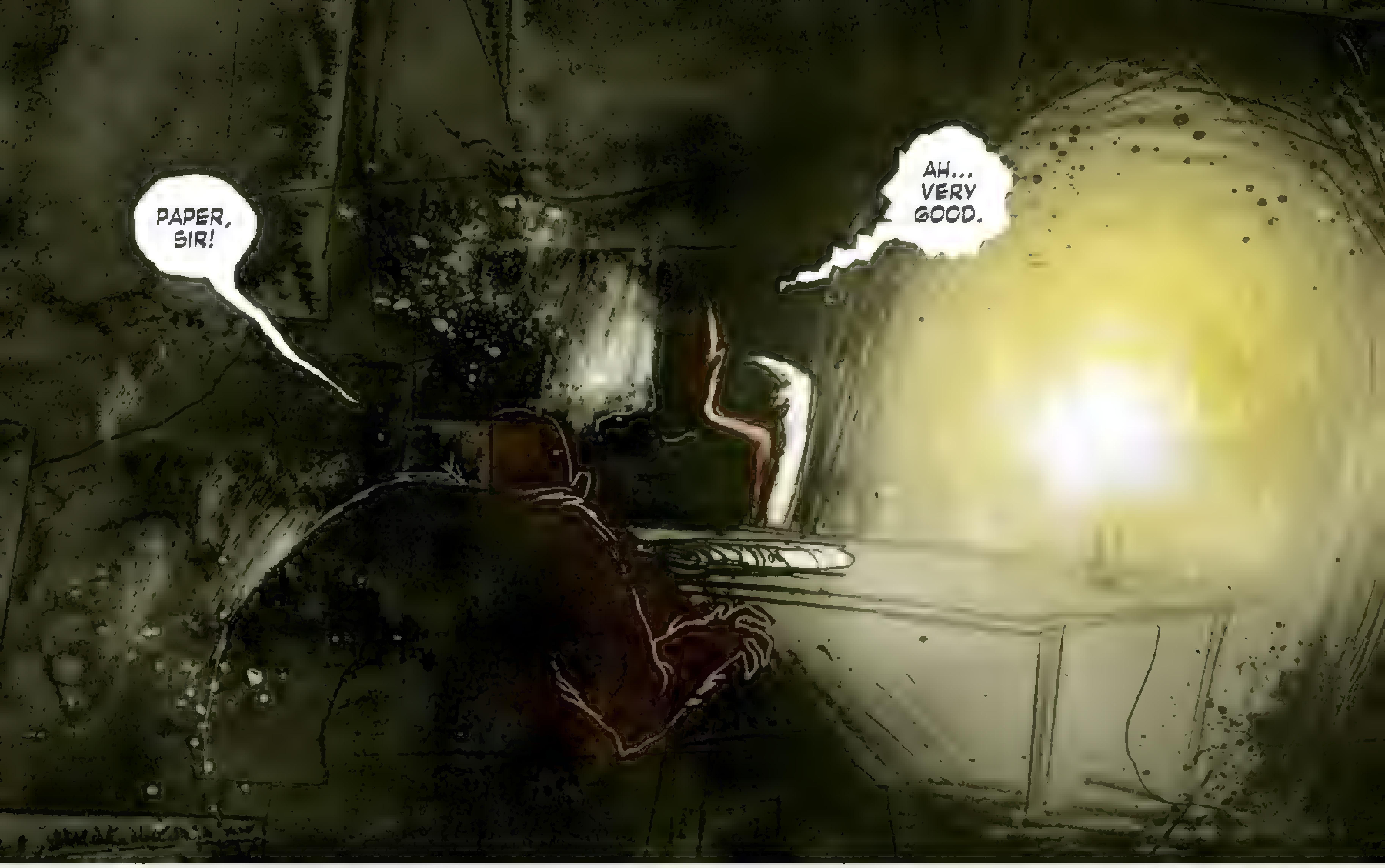

FUCKIN' GHOUL.

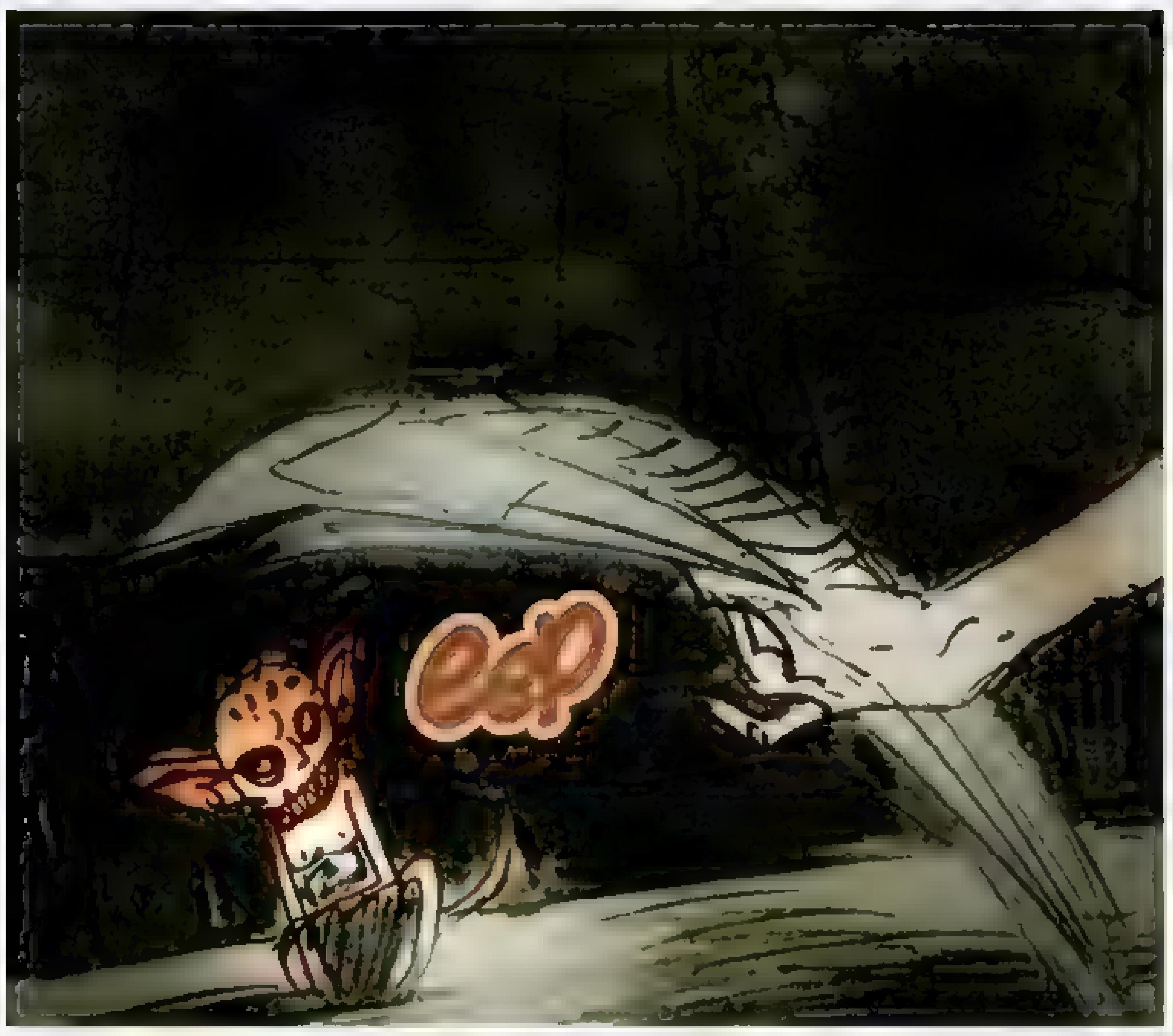

Elsewhere underground.
THUD
SPLASH
THUD
SPLASH
SNORRT!
GRUNT!

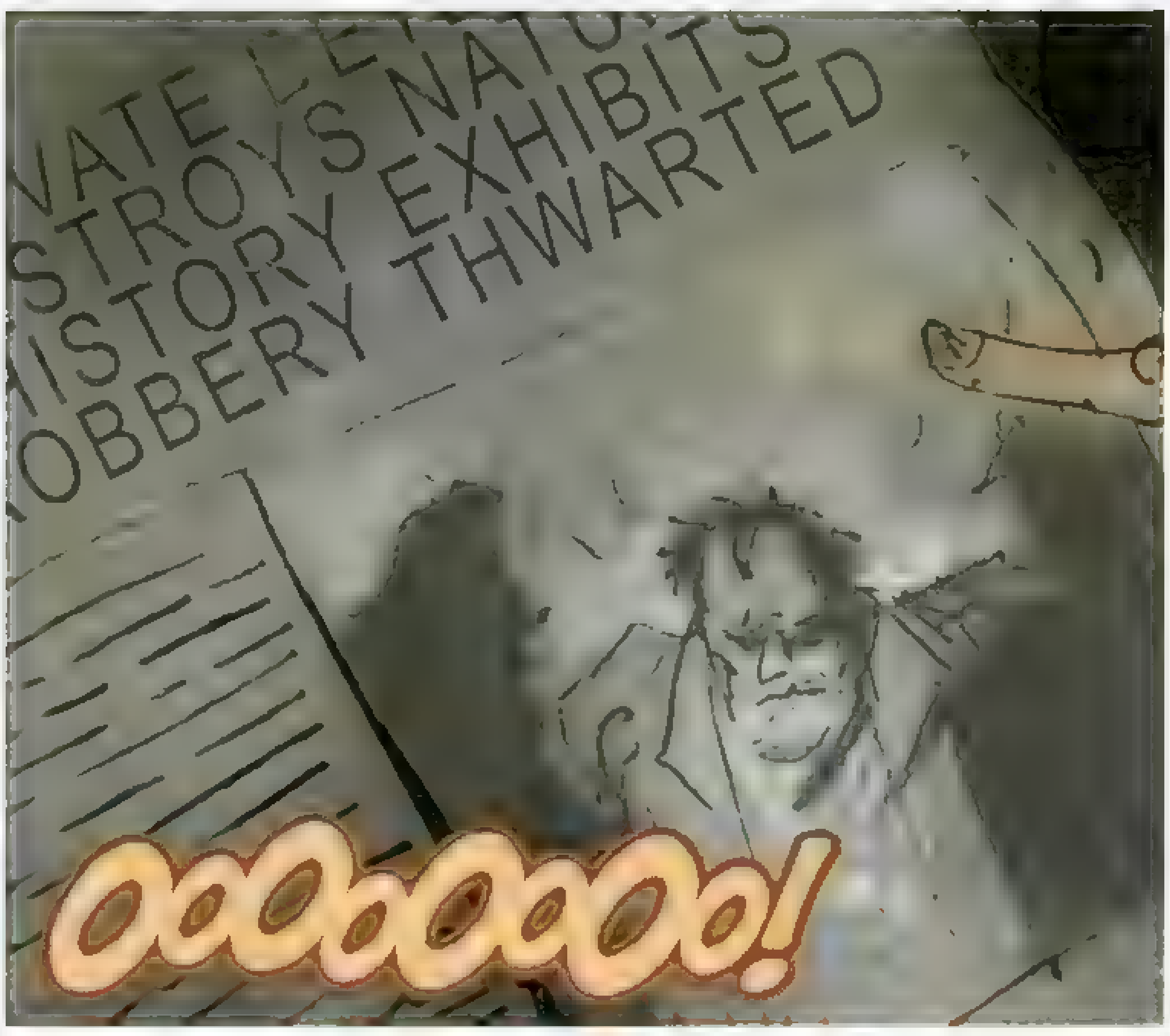


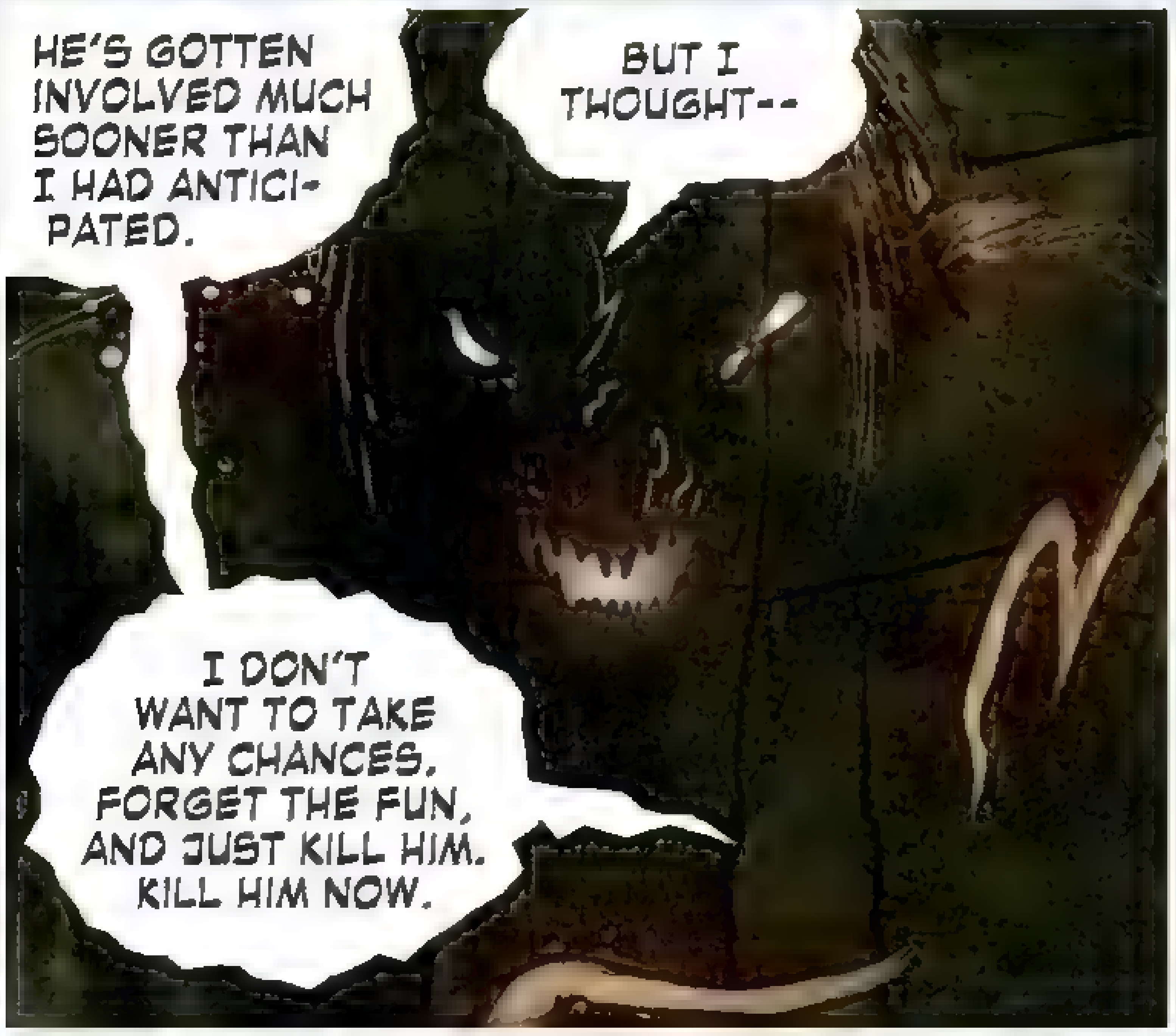


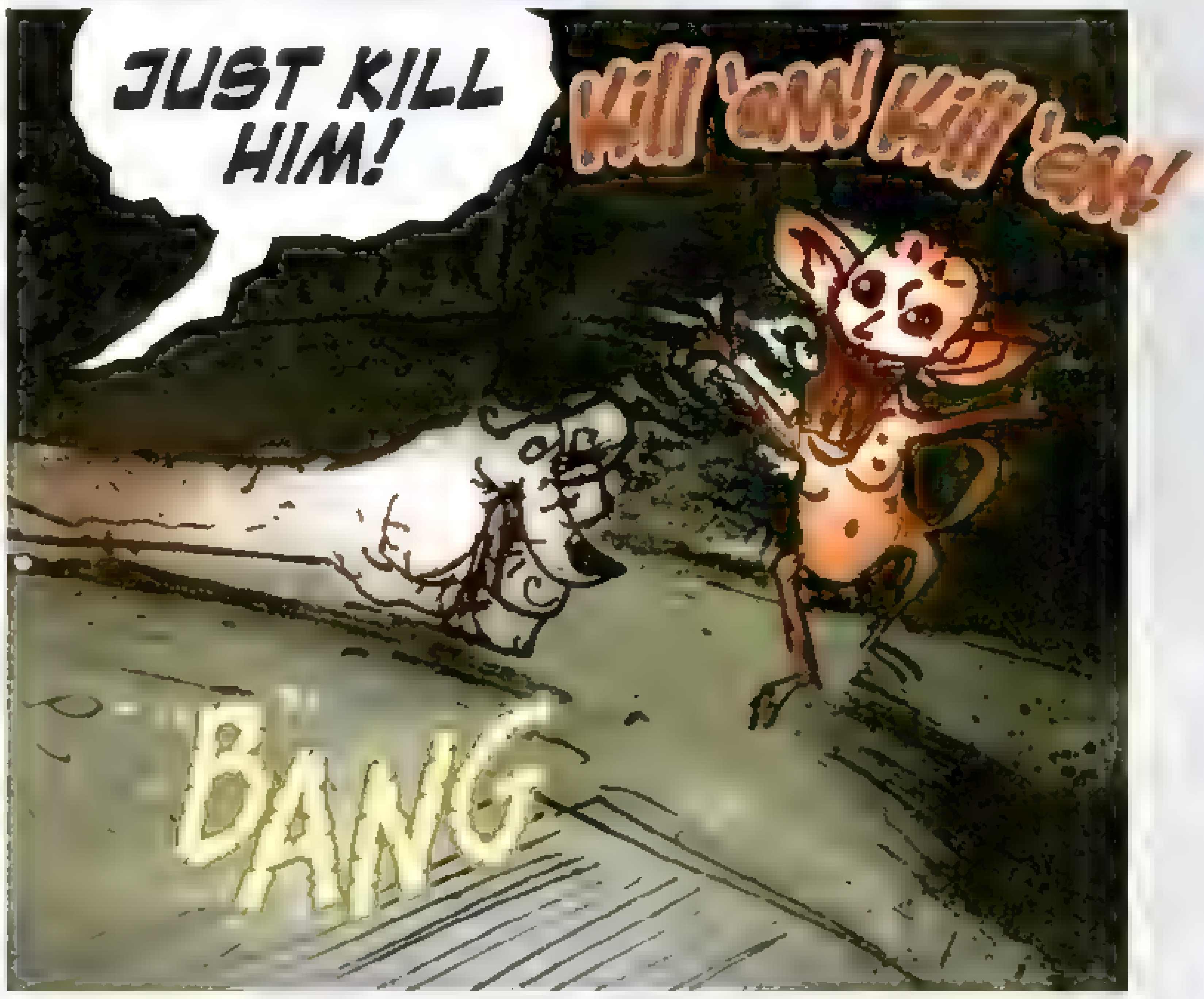

GO FISH!


PAPER, SIR!
AH... VERY GOOD.


eep


VATE
STROYS NATU
HISTORY EXHIBITS
ROBBERY THWARTED
Ooooooooo!


HE'S GOTTEN INVOLVED MUCH SOONER THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED.
BUT I THOUGHT--
I DON'T WANT TO TAKE ANY CHANCES. FORGET THE FUN, AND JUST KILL HIM. KILL HIM NOW.


JUST KILL HIM!
Kill 'em! Kill 'em!
BANG

SLOW
DOUG'S GOING DOWN. MOVE THEM TRAFFIC CONES OUT MORE.
UH...GIVE HIM A LITTLE MORE--
HOLY CRAP! DOUG! WHAT'S HAPPENING DOWN THERE?!
DOUG?
DOUG?!
DOUUUUUUG!!

COME ON, HELP ME. I CAN'T EAT ALL THIS.
DON'T EAT, OR CAN'T EAT?
I DO NOT EAT. THANK YOU.
I DO NOT EAT BECAUSE IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO MY SURVIVAL.
WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU EAT? DOES IT JUST SIT THERE AND TURN MOLDY AND THEN INTO MAGGOTS AND SHIT?
NO, MY BODY CAN DEAL WITH FOREIGN SUBSTANCES IF NEED BE.
CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
OF COURSE.
WHAT EXACTLY IS A--
--IS A GHOUL? YOU KNOW-- WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GHOULS AND ZOMBIES AND VAMPIRES AND ALL THAT? I HAVE MY THEORIES, BUT YOU NEVER TALK ABOUT IT.
IT IS SIMPLE, REALLY. VAMPIRES ARE UNDEAD BECAUSE OF A VIRUS. THEIR CONDITION IS MUCH MORE AKIN TO A DISEASE. WEREWOLVES ARE VERY MUCH THE SAME. IT IS RELATED TO A FORM OF RABIES, EXCEPT THAT THE RESULTS ARE MUCH MORE DRASTIC, AND CONSIDERABLY MORE PERMANENT. ZOM--
DO NOT TURN YOUR HEAD, CAL. I BELIEVE WE ARE BEING WATCHED. NINE O'CLOCK, BLACK CAR.
YEAH, I SAW THEM WHEN WE SAT DOWN. NOT VERY SLICK, ARE THEY?
HI GUYS!
SCCREEECH!

YOU WERE SAYING...
ZOMBIES ARE A BIT OF AN ENIGMA. SOME SAY THEY ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF A CURSE OR SPELL, AND HAVE NO WILL OF THEIR OWN, BUT MUST SERVE A MASTER. OTHERS HAVE SAID THAT THE ZOMBIE IS THE RESULT OF A BLOOD CONDITION AS WELL.
I THOUGHT VAMPIRES WERE CURSED?
THEY JUST LIKE TO THINK THEY ARE, YOU KNOW, FOR THE DRAMA.
REALLY, IT IS JUST A BLOOD DISORDER PASSED ON FROM VICTIM TO VICTIM. BASIC SCIENCE.
WHAT ABOUT GHOULS?
WE ARE THE SIMPLEST FORM OF THE UNDEAD. WE ARE DEAD, YET WE LIVE. SOME SAY THAT WE LACK A SOUL, THEREFORE WE ARE STUCK BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.
BUT YOU'RE NOT KILLERS.
BECAUSE WE REQUIRE NOTHING TO SURVIVE. IF WE NEEDED FLESH OR BLOOD TO LIVE, THEN WE TOO, WOULD BE YOUR ENEMY.
ANY IDEA WHERE ALL THIS STARTED? YOU KNOW, WHERE YOU ALL CAME FROM?
DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR KIND COMES FROM?
DO YOU HAVE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION WITH A QUESTION?
AS LONG AS YOU ASK QUESTIONS THAT HAVE NO ANSWERS.
YOU MIND IT? BEING A GHOUL, I MEAN?
AS MUCH AS YOU MIND BEING HUMAN, I PRESUME.
WHAT NOW?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I'M GOING DOWNTOWN TO SEE IF I CAN GET MY MITTS ON SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THAT GUY I POPPED AT THAT MONSTER MASH. I FOUND OUT HIS NAME WAS *MAYNARD CRANDALL.* NO PRIORS, WARRANTS, NOTHING--NOT EVEN A HOME ADDRESS OR WORK. I'M GONNA SEE WHAT I CAN DIG UP. IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT IT BEATS WAITING FOR SOMETHING ELSE TO HAPPEN.

I BELIEVE I WILL CHECK IN WITH MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND SEE WHAT THE WORD IS.
YOU DO THAT.
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON, CAL. I TELL YOU, I CAN FEEL IT IN THE MARROW OF MY VERY BEING.
WHEN YOU FEEL SOMETHING I CAN USE, LET ME KNOW.
POLICE EVIDENC WAREHOU
A half-pint later.
ANAL EXPOSE
HERE WE GO.

LT. BRUEGER SAID SHE'D CALL.
UM... OKAY.
YEAH, GOT IT RIGHT HERE.
SAY, WOULD YOU MIND IF I USE THE PHONE? I GOT A BET I WANT TO CALL IN.
SWIFT MOVE WAITING HERE FOR ME...
BECAUSE NOW I KNOW...
TOUGH LUCK, DOG-BOY.
I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

THIS IS LT. BRUEGER. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE AFTER THE TONE.
BRUEGER. CAL. I'M HERE AT RECORDS. I DIDN'T DO IT.
NOW LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF NEW HELL WE CAN UNCOVER...
RESTRICTED

ISLE 6B
MOST CASES AREN'T REALLY MYSTERIES LIKE PEOPLE THINK.
IT'S MORE LIKE ONE OF THOSE STUPID-ASS CONNECT-THE-DOTS PICTURES.
ONCE YOU FIND A LEAD, LIKE A NAME, YOU JUST LOOK FOR THE NEXT DOT.
I'VE NEVER ONCE HAD A CASE WHERE THE GUILTY TURNED OUT TO BE SOMEBODY UNEXPECTED, LIKE THE BUTLER OR SOME SUCH AGATHA CHRISTIE BULLSHIT.
THEN AGAIN, I HUNT MONSTERS, SO THEY TEND TO BE A LITTLE EASIER TO SPOT.
WELL, AT LEAST FOR ME THEY ARE.

couch
DAMMIT.
THIS TIME WAS DIFFERENT, THOUGH. NONE OF THE USUAL PATTERNS WERE POPPING UP.
CRANDALL MAYNARD UNSOLVED 6385 D.O.D-10/3/05
SO FAR I HAD TWO INCIDENTS OF EXTREMELY PECULIAR MONSTER BEHAVIOR--A ROBBERY AND A ROBBERY/MURDER.
THE FUTURE
THE ONLY CONNECTION OR LEAD I HAD WAS THIS FREAK *MAYNARD CRANDALL.*
I'D POPPED HIM A WHILE BACK WHEN I WALKED IN ON HIM HAVING TEA WITH A VAMPIRE, A WERE-WOLF, AND A GAGGLE OF OTHER MISFITS.
IT WAS A FLIMSY LEAD AT BEST, BUT IT WAS THIS OR SIT AT HOME PICKING MY BUTT UNTIL SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED.
FRANCE
AND THEN, SOMETIMES, THINGS JUST CONNECT.
CRANDALL
supervisor: Norman Perki
Class A01
SOMETIMES, THEY EXPLODE IN YOUR HANDS.
IT LOOKED LIKE GEEK-BOY HAD WORKED FOR NORMAN OVER AT THE MUSEUM.
NORMAN PERKI
& ASSISTANT LE
THE EXPEDITION
HOPES OF LOCATIN
RARE EUROPEAN
FLEA.

CRANDALL, WHO I SAW HAVING A MONSTER SOIREE, WORKED AND TRAVELED WITH NORMAN PERKINS, WHO WAS MURDERED BY A VAMP, A WEREWOLF, AND A ZOMBIE.
KA-CHING!
SEE WHAT I MEAN?
Chandler Street
NO MYSTERY.
CONNECT THE DOTS.
EXIT
A subterranean chamber.
UHHHHH.
UHHHH... WHAT HAPPENED?

W... WHERE AM I?
...AND WHY AM I CHAINED TO THIS WALL?
GRUNT
HISSSSSSSSSSS
SNORT
AHHHHHHHH!
GOOD, HE'S AWAKE. NOW WE CAN BEGIN.
HMMMM... YES?
THE TIME IS AT HAND, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. YEARS OF SEARCHING AND PLANNING, RESEARCH AND HEARTACHE, COME DOWN TO THIS *SINGLE* MOMENT.
GET ON WITH IT!
I HOLD IN MY HANDS THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...

...AND OUR DESTINY!
DITCH THE SPEECH, EINSTEIN! GET TO THE POINT!
P... PLEASE... DON'T.
DON'T!!!
OH...
...NO.

ARRRH! THE HUMAN IS FREE! HE BROKE THE CHAINS!
SNAP!
LET HIM GO. I WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS.
LET'S SEE HOW THE WORLD RESPONDS TO A LITTLE *BLAST FROM THE PAST.*
BLAST FROM THE PAST! BLASTER FROM THE PAAAST!
YESSSSSSS!
Elsewhere under the city...

GHOULS OF LOS ANGELES!
SHUT UP AND LISTEN!
THEY ARE COMING INTO OUR TUNNELS AND TELLING US--WHO HAVE SPENT DECADES HERE--TO GET OUT OF THEIR WAY! THIS IS *OUR* TERRITORY! IT ALWAYS *HAS* BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE, AND IF WE MUST, WE *WILL* FIGHT FOR WHAT IS OURS!
THERE ARE STRANGE EVENTS OCCURRING AMONG THE *DARK CREATURES,* AND WE ARE INTENTIONALLY BEING LEFT OUT. I WANT TO KNOW WHY. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE UP TO. ARE YOU WITH US?!
WAIT, EMEK, TABITHA, MY FRIENDS. LET'S NOT BE RASH. THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE. I AM INVOLVED IN AN INVESTIGATION TO UNCOVER WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SEWERS, AS WELL AS ON THE SURFACE.
AN INVESTIGATION WITH YOUR HUMAN FRIEND. WE LIKE CAL MCDONALD, BUT WHY SHOULD WE TRUST HIM?
I ASK ONLY FOR A LITTLE PATIENCE.
THERE HAVE BEEN MORE ATTACKS, BROTHER. GHOULS ARE BEING HURT. THE ATTACKS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE BRUTAL. DISMEMBERMENT, FIRE, ATTACKS THAT EVEN THE UNDEAD CANNOT SURVIVE. WE MUST ACT NOW. YOUR DETECTIVE FRIEND CANNOT HELP US.
WE WILL GO INTO THE TUNNELS AND FIGHT FOR WHAT IS OURS! *THE TIME IS NOW!!* ARE YOU WITH US!?
YES!
YEAH!
WHOO!

BANGG!
SHIT!
WHAT THE?!

MOTHERFUCKER.
AHHHHH! OW, OW, OW...GOD-DAMMIT!
HOW'S THAT FEEL, YOU *FUCK!*
CRRRACK!
SNEAK... UP ON ME, WILL YA!
AAAROOOOOOO
WHEN WILL THEY LEARN? HEH, HEH.
STUPID MONSTERS. NOBODY GETS THE JUMP ON ME.
MAKING YOURSELF AT HOME?
LIEUTENANT BRUEGER JUST CALLED. SHE LEFT A MESSAGE.
YIPPEE.
SHE SAID, *IF YOU DON'T GET YOUR FAT, LAZY, BASTARD SELF DOWN TO THE STATION RIGHT NOW, YOU CAN KISS HER LILY-WHITE ASS.*
WELL THEN. I GUESS WE'D BETTER GET DOWN THERE. I'LL BRING JIM BEAM WITH ME.
LET'S SHAG ASS.

CAN I ASK YOU A PERSONAL QUESTION?
NOPE.
THIS POLICEWOMAN BRUEGER-- THERE IS ROMANTIC TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU, YET YOU ALREADY HAVE THE WOMAN SABRINA LYNCH OF "SPECULATOR" MAGAZINE. ARE YOU ATTEMPTING TO JUGGLE TWO DAMES?
FIRST OF ALL, SABRINA IS OFF GETTING PICS OF CROP CIRCLES, AND WE AIN'T GOT ANYTHING EXCLUSIVE. SECOND, I DON'T DATE COPS. AND THIRD, SHUT THE FUCK UP.
YOU HAVE ANSWERED MY QUESTION.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, MCDONALD!
PLEASE... JUST ONE LITTLE BREAK.
HELLO, BOYS.
THE LIEUTENANT WANTS YOU DOWN AT THE STATION FOR QUESTIONING.
YEAH, I WAS--
SEEMS SOMEBODY OFFED A SECURITY OFFICER AT THE EVIDENCE WAREHOUSE. YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
DEAD GUY? WAS HE FAT AND NAKED AND SORT OF BLOODY AROUND THE NECK? I THINK I SAW HIM.
COME ON, MCDONALD. THE SOONER YOU COME DOWN, THE SOONER YOU'LL BE BACK OUT GHOST BUSTING.
IF YOU WANT TO, WE CAN CUFF YOU...IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT TO GO DOWN?
NO, I'LL GO. I WAS HEADING THERE ANYWAYS.
CAN I PLAY WITH THE SIREN?

AH-LEMME-GO-AHHHHHHH!
MAYBE *HE* DID IT.
SHUT UP.
DID YOU HAVE TO BRING THE FREAK SHOW?
HE'S MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM.
WAIT HERE.
WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?
SOME NUT JOB CLAIMS HE WAS ATTACKED BY MONSTERS, WHAT ELSE?
LOT OF THAT GOING AROUND. YOU OKAY? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
I'M GETTING A *LOT* OF PRESSURE FROM UPSTAIRS. LAST NIGHT SOME LUNATICS BROKE INTO THE POLICE ARMORY AND MADE OFF WITH SEVEN CASES OF POLICE RIOT GEAR--GUNS, HELMETS, SHIELDS. THE WHOLE DEAL. WE'VE GOT NOTHING ON THE R.I.I.D.D. BREAK-IN, NOTHING ON THE MUSEUM MURDER, AND NOW A COP SHOWS UP DEAD IN HIS OFFICE AT THE EVIDENCE WAREHOUSE. THE LAST TWO HAVE A COMMON DENOMINATOR. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?
THAT WOULD BE *ME.*
THAT'S RIGHT. NOBODY THINKS YOU KILLED ANYBODY, AND FRANKLY NOBODY CARES, BUT SOMETHING'S GOT TO GIVE. THEY WANT SOMEBODY ARRESTED AND CHARGED. PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVE SOMETHING FOR ME.

WANTED
WANTED
HMMMM?
I HAVE A LEAD, BUT NOTHING SOLID YET. YOU REMEMBER A WEIRDO NAMED CRANDALL THAT I HAD A RUN-IN WITH A WHILE BACK?
RUN-IN? YOU *KILLED* HIM.
WELL, HE MIGHT BE CONNECTED WITH THE LAB BREAK-IN AND THE PERKINS MURDER. I FOUND OUT HE WORKED UNDER PERKINS AT THE MUSEUM. I HAVE HIS HOME--
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. YOUR BIG LEAD IS A *DEAD GUY?*
DO YOU TRUST ME?
WELL... YEAH.
DO YOU THINK I'M CRAZY?
OF *COURSE.*

THEN START BELIEVING ME. TRY TO BELIEVE IN THINGS THAT LOGIC TELLS YOU *NOT* TO. OPEN YOUR MIND, AND ACCEPT THAT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, THINGS ARE NOT AS THEY SEEM. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GOING TO CRACK THIS THING AND MAYBE SAVE A LOT OF LIVES IN THE LONG RUN.
OKAY.
I NEED PROOF, CAL.
I'LL GET IT. DON'T WORRY.
CAL, MS. BRUEGER! I THINK YOU SHOULD GET OUT HERE!

HOLY CRAP!
GAH-GAH-GAH-AHHHHHHHH!
HE'S HAVING A HEART ATTACK! OPEN THE CAGE! SOMEBODY CALL AN AMBULANCE!
NO! DON'T! STAY BACK!
AHHHHHHH!
AAAAARRGH
EVERYBODY CLEAR THE AREA! NOW!

RARRRRRRRH
OH... MY... GOD.
DAMN... LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT FREAK.
BRUEGER, LISTEN TO ME. WE'RE GOING TO NEED WEAPONS.
CARTER! HOPKINS! WHITE! I WANT SHOTGUNS, TASERS, AND GAS, RIGHT AWAY!
ARRRARRGH!
SMASH
CRASH
ARRRARRGH!

WHERE MIGHT YOU BE GOING?
PLAN B... RUN!
ARRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
ARRRARRRGH!
SWOOSH
SWOOSH
HA!
TAKE THAT!
SMACK

ARRRARRGH!
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
HOLD YOUR FIRE!
WAIT, DON'T...
ARRRRRRR
...YELL.
IT WAS RIGHT THEN, AS I FLEW THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A RAG DOLL, THAT I REALIZED A COUPLE THINGS.

BLAMM
BLAMM
FIRST...THAT WAS THE *BIGGEST* FUCKING WEREWOLF I'D EVER SEEN.
BLAMM
BLAMM
SECOND, IT HAD BEEN HIT BY AT LEAST A *HUNDRED* ROUNDS AND THERE WASN'T EVEN A DROP OF BLOOD.
BLAMM
BLAMM
BULLETS ARE HAVING... NO EFFECT.
I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
THE SLUGS WERE RIPPING HARMLESSLY THROUGH ITS BODY, EVEN THE HEAD.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
JUST LIKE THE *STUPID FUCKIN' LEGEND.*
I FELT LIKE AN ASSWIPE FOR EVEN THINKING IT, BUT I WAS OUT OF OPTIONS.
CKSON
HEY!
I HOPE THIS IS REAL.

HEY, HAIRBALL!
I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
DOIK
Arrroo?

IS THAT ENOUGH PROOF FOR YOU?
YEAH... IS HE DEAD?
YEP...BUT I JUST DON'T GET IT. THE *SILVER* WORKED. JUST LIKE ALL THE *SUPERSTITIONS.*
CONNECT THE DOTS.
WHAT?
I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE...THAT WOUND... *MAYNARD CRANDALL.*
OKAY. YOU'VE GOT ME. TELL ME WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND.
WE'VE GOT TO CHECK OUT CRANDALL'S APARTMENT.
Los Angeles Transit System.
Rush hour.

NEXT STOP, NORTH HOLLYWOOD.
SORRY. SCRATCH THAT.
TH HOLLYWOO
NEXT STOP, UNIVERSAL STUDIOS.
IT CIRCLE
OOPS.
NEXT STOP...
A WHOLE NEW KIND OF HELL!

WHAT WAS THAT?
IZ AN ERF-QUAKE.
SHHH, LISTEN.
IT'S COMING FROM THIS WAY.
FOLLOW ME.
OH MY GOD.
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT ARE THEY DOING WITH THOSE PEOPLE?
THEY'RE... TAKING THEM PRISONER!
KEEP IT MOVING, MEATBAG!
GO TELL MO'LOCK WHAT WE'VE SEEN.
NOBODY'S GOING ANY-WHERE.
FUCK.

NICE. THIS PLACE HAS BEEN SHUT DOWN SINCE THE EARLY NINETIES.
IT'S THE ONLY ADDRESS ON THE *NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM* RECORDS. YOU NOTICE ANYTHING STRANGE?
YES. THE PLACE IS CLEAN. *TOO* CLEAN.
NO GRAFFITI, NO TRASH. THE PLACE SHOULD BE PRIME TERRITORY FOR CRACK HOUSING AND VAGRANTS. IT'S LIKE IT'S HAUNTED.
ARE YOU TRYING TO FREAK ME OUT? I'M ALREADY HANGING ON BY A THREAD HERE.
CAN YOU AT LEAST TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK WE MIGHT FIND? IT WOULD HELP IF I KNEW WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR.
I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD HUNCH THIS *CRANDALL* GUY WAS MESSING AROUND WITH SOME PRETTY HEAVY SHIT WHEN HE DIED. I WANT TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS.
I KNOW YOU DON'T *BUY* WHAT I DO, BUT I'VE BEEN AT IT MY WHOLE LIFE, AND A FEW RULES ALWAYS APPLY.
MONSTERS *NEVER* MIX. MONSTERS HUNT FOR FOOD, OR TO PROCREATE. THEY DON'T ORGANIZE, AND THEY DON'T STEAL. LASTLY, ANY KIND OF MONSTER CAN BE KILLED BY THE SAME MEANS AS ANYTHING ELSE MADE OF FLESH AND BLOOD.
EVERY ONE OF THESE RULES HAS BEEN BROKEN IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, AND THE ONLY CONNECTION I HAVE, AS TENUOUS AS IT IS, IS THAT WHEN I KILLED CRANDALL, HE WAS ORGANIZING MONSTERS, AND HE HAD THE SAME RED WELT. NOW ADD THE FACT THAT *SOMEBODY'S* BEEN TRYING TO KILL ME EVER SINCE I BROKE UP THAT HOEDOWN, AND THAT FREAKIN' *SUPER-WEREWOLF* AT THE STATION. I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW ANY LEAD I HAVE, NO MATTER HOW THIN IT IS.

NICE SPEECH.
THANK YOU.
WHAT WAS SO SUPER ABOUT THAT THING AT THE STATION?
IT WAS TWICE THE SIZE OF ANYTHING I'VE SEEN BEFORE. BULLETS DIDN'T HARM IT. THAT *SILVER BADGE* DID. THAT'S RIGHT OUT OF A LON CHANEY JR. FLICK, THE LEGENDS, AND SUPERSTITIONS. THOSE WAYS OF DEALING WITH MONSTERS ARE FOLKLORE, PURE HORSESHIT.
EVIDENTLY NOT.
I KNOW. I DON'T GET IT, AND IT SCARES THE CRAP OUT OF ME.
SHHH.
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
NOTHING. JUST WANTED TO KEEP YOU ON YOUR TOES.
OH. YOU'RE A RIOT.
BRUEGER, WAIT!
NOT TWICE IN A ROW, SMARTASS.
LOOK.
BOOBY TRAP. I THINK WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK.
CHRIST, WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE A TRAIL OF BREAD CRUMBS.
1306
1036
CRASH

WOW.

I THINK WE HIT THE CRACKPOT JACKPOT.
FIRST GUESS, I'D SAY THIS GUY WAS A MAJOR SHUT-IN.
I'D SAY YOU WERE PROBABLY RIGHT.

LISTEN TO THIS.
"FOUND IT! THE HUB OF FOLKLORE AND LEGEND. AN AREA, ONE AREA, STRANGE ACCOUNTS AND STORIES TOLD THROUGH THE CENTURIES. CROSS-REFERENCED WITH PLAGUE CASES. COULD THIS BE THE SOURCE?!"
SOURCE OF WHAT?
BEATS ME. SOMETHING IN ROMANIA. AND WHO THE HELL WAS HE WRITING THESE NOTES FOR?
PROBABLY HIMSELF.
To: Hollywood
THIS GUY SOUNDS LIKE A CASEBOOK OBSESSIVE, AND THAT PROBABLY LEAVES PLENTY OF ROOM FOR MEGALOMANIA.
ADD *GERMOPHOBIA* TO THE LIST.
LOOK AT ALL THIS CRAP. WEREWOLVES, VAMPIRES, AND DEAD THINGS. THE GUY WAS *INTO IT*. REMIND YOU OF ANYBODY?

LOOK AT THIS.
FIGURES. THROW *STALKER* ON THE HEAP.
WHAT ARE THEY?
NOT SURE.
CAREFUL.
IT'S OKAY. WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE DEAD... BUT THANKS FOR WORRYING ABOUT ME.

BUGS?
LOOKS LIKE FLEAS. TANKS FULL OF THEM.
GREAT, WE HAVE A RECLUSIVE, GERMOPHOBIC, MONSTER-OBSESSED, FLEA-RAISING DEAD MAN...THIS IS USELESS.
ACTUALLY, WE HAVE A PERFECT CONNECTION. FLEAS WERE THE PRIMARY CARRIER OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE. THAT SAMPLE STOLEN FROM THE LAB, IT WAS BUBONIC, RIGHT?
YOU THINK THIS GUY WANTED TO RELEASE THE *BLACK PLAGUE* AGAIN? YOU THINK THAT WAS HIS ANGLE?
NOT LIKELY. MODERN ANTIBIOTICS CAN DEAL WITH PLAGUE EASILY. BLACK PLAGUE COMES FROM BACTERIA. IF SOMEBODY WANTED TO DO SERIOUS DAMAGE, THEY'D GO WITH A VIRUS.
I SAY WE START DIGGING THROUGH THESE BOOKS. NOTHING'S GONNA JUST JUMP OUT AND BITE OUR ASS.
THAT'S A LOVELY THOUGHT. WHAT NOW?
DON'T BE SO SURE.
=SIGH=

Later.
CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION, CAL?
NO.
WHY DO YOU DO THIS?
WHAT? *DRINK?*
NO, *THIS.* LIVE LIKE THIS, SURROUNDED BY SUCH HORRIBLE CASES, PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE POSITION YOU DO? I MEAN, THE MONEY CAN'T BE ALL THAT GOOD.
I DIDN'T DECIDE TO DO WHAT I DO. I HAVE NO CHOICE. THESE THINGS EXIST, AND I CAN'T SEEM TO AVOID THEM. I LEARNED THAT A LONG TIME AGO.
YOU'RE JUST BEING MELODRAMATIC. EVERYBODY HAS A CHOICE TO DO WHAT THEY WANT WITH THEIR LIVES.
THAT SOUNDS NICE ON A GREETING CARD, BUT IT'S BULLSHIT. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO CAN SPOT A VAMPIRE IN A CROWD? HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO IS APPROACHED BY A DEAD MAN ASKING FOR HELP? THAT'S WHAT I'VE LIVED WITH MY *WHOLE LIFE.* EVERY WAY I'VE EVER TURNED PUT ME *SMACK* IN THE FACE OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND BIZARRE. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I WENT TO THE POLICE ACADEMY?
THE WHOLE PLACE WAS BUILT ON A GRAVEYARD. WITHIN DAYS OF MY BEING THERE, IT WAS INFESTED WITH THE LIVING DEAD, OUT FOR REVENGE. I HAD TO TAKE CONTROL. I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW WHAT TO DO-- I'D HAD A LIFETIME OF TRAINING. I GOT SOME PRIEST TO BLESS THE WATER SUPPLY AND DROWNED THE DEAD IN HOLY WATER. NO THANKS, NOTHING, BECAUSE NOBODY WANTED TO ADMIT WHAT HAPPENED.
DOES YOUR FAMILY KNOW WHAT YOU DO?
MY MOTHER, FATHER, AND LITTLE SISTER WERE KILLED BY A DRUNK DRIVER. I HAD AN OLDER BROTHER, TOO, BUT...AFTER THAT I GOT BACK INTO DOING A LOT OF DRUGS, BUT THE FREAKY SHIT KEPT HAPPENING. I COULDN'T ESCAPE IT. I STARTED TAKING CASES HERE AND THERE ON THE SIDE. I TOOK MORE DRUGS. THEN I GOT FIRED FROM THE FORCE, AND YOU KNOW THE REST. NOW I'M THE "*SPECULATOR*" AND "*WEEKLY WORLD NEWS*" POSTER BOY.
AND YOU?

I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF THIS. WHATEVER THIS GUY WAS DOING WAS NUTS, BUT HE'S DEAD AND I STILL DON'T SEE THE POINT IN ...
CAL? ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? HELLO?
THIS IS INCREDIBLE... AMAZING...I DON'T BELIEVE IT...
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
LISTEN TO THIS ENTRY.
"--OF ALL OF THE CASES OF VILLAGES DESTROYED, NONE PROVED MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN THE OUTBREAK I'VE DISCOVERED IN 1349.
"IT OCCURRED IN A LARGE VILLAGE NEAR THE BORDER OF YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA CALLED MOLDOVA NOUA."

Romania. 1349.
IT WAS IN THIS VILLAGE THAT A DIFFERENT STRAIN OF THE BACTERIA CAME TO ROOST AND INFECTED THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF OVER TWO THOUSAND POOR FARMERS. AS I SURMISED, THE STRAIN WAS A FREAK MUTATION OF THE **BUBONIC PLAGUE**, BUT THE EXACT REASON FOR THE MUTATION IS STILL A MYSTERY.
THE STRAIN DID KILL THE PEOPLE OF MOLDOVA NOUA, BUT THEY DID NOT STAY DEAD. THE PLAGUE FOR THESE CHOSEN FEW HAD A SPECIAL EFFECT ON THE BLOOD AND ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.
THE PEOPLE WERE REBORN.
THEY ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND BLOOMED INTO CREATURES THAT WOULD BECOME THE ROOT OF LEGENDS FOR ALL TIME.
THE FLEAS' THIRST FOR BLOOD TRANSFERRED INTO THE PEOPLE OF MOLDOVA NOUA AND DEFINED THE NATURE OF THE MUTATIONS.

THEY BECAME **MONSTERS.**
SOME BECAME **VAMPIRES;** OTHERS **WEREWOLVES;** OTHERS BECAME CREATURES THAT DEFIED DESCRIPTION.
ALL UNABLE TO BE KILLED EXCEPT FOR THE FEW ODD METHODS: THE WEAKNESS OF SILVER FOR THE **LYCANTHROPE,** THE STAKE, CROSS, AND SUNLIGHT FOR THE **VAMPIRE.**
MARVELOUS, UNBEATABLE CREATURES. I DO NOT YET UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR THESE WEAKNESSES. POSSIBLY IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE BLOOD.

"THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THE TOWN DISAPPEARED OVER THE COURSE OF ONLY A FEW HOURS OR DAYS.
"THEY WERE NEVER SEEN OR HEARD FROM AGAIN. IT WAS A MYSTERY THAT WENT UNSOLVED UNTIL I, MAYNARD CRANDALL, DISCOVERED THE TRUTH: MONSTRUM!"
"MONSTRUM"? GOOD LORD ... THE BIRTH OF MONSTERS.
THUD!
THAT'S NOT GOOD.
CAN WE PLEASE GET OUT OF HERE?
HELP ME GATHER THESE BOOKS.
THUD!
FOOTSTEPS. SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS IS HERE.
STAY WITH ME AND DON'T PANIC.
JUST WATCH YOUR OWN ASS.

JESUS!!
LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT FREAK!
SHOOT IT!
BLAM! BLAM!
DAMMIT...NOTHING... JUST LIKE THE WEREWOLF.
LET HIM GET CLOSE.
CLOSE?! HOW CLOSE?!
STEADY... JUST HOLD ON.

?
AAARRRGH!
THANK YOU, MAYNARD CRANDALL!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID BULLETS KILLED THESE THINGS!
I'M AS SHOCKED AS YOU ARE, SISTER! NOTHING'S STOPPING HIM!
RUN!
THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. THIS WAY.
GET IN THE CHUTE!
TRASH

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE THINGS.
I'VE NEVER DEALT WITH *ANYTHING* LIKE THESE BEFORE.
THIS IS HARDLY THE TIME FOR A CIGARETTE BREAK.
YOU'RE FUNNY. I JUST WANT TO HEAT THINGS UP AROUND HERE.
WHOOSH!

DO YOU HAVE A TIRE IRON?
WHAT?
DO YOU HAVE A TIRE IRON?!
IN THE TRUNK.
START THE CAR.
LET'S HOPE ALL THE LEGENDS ARE TRUE.
HIISSSSSSSSS!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S WORKING!

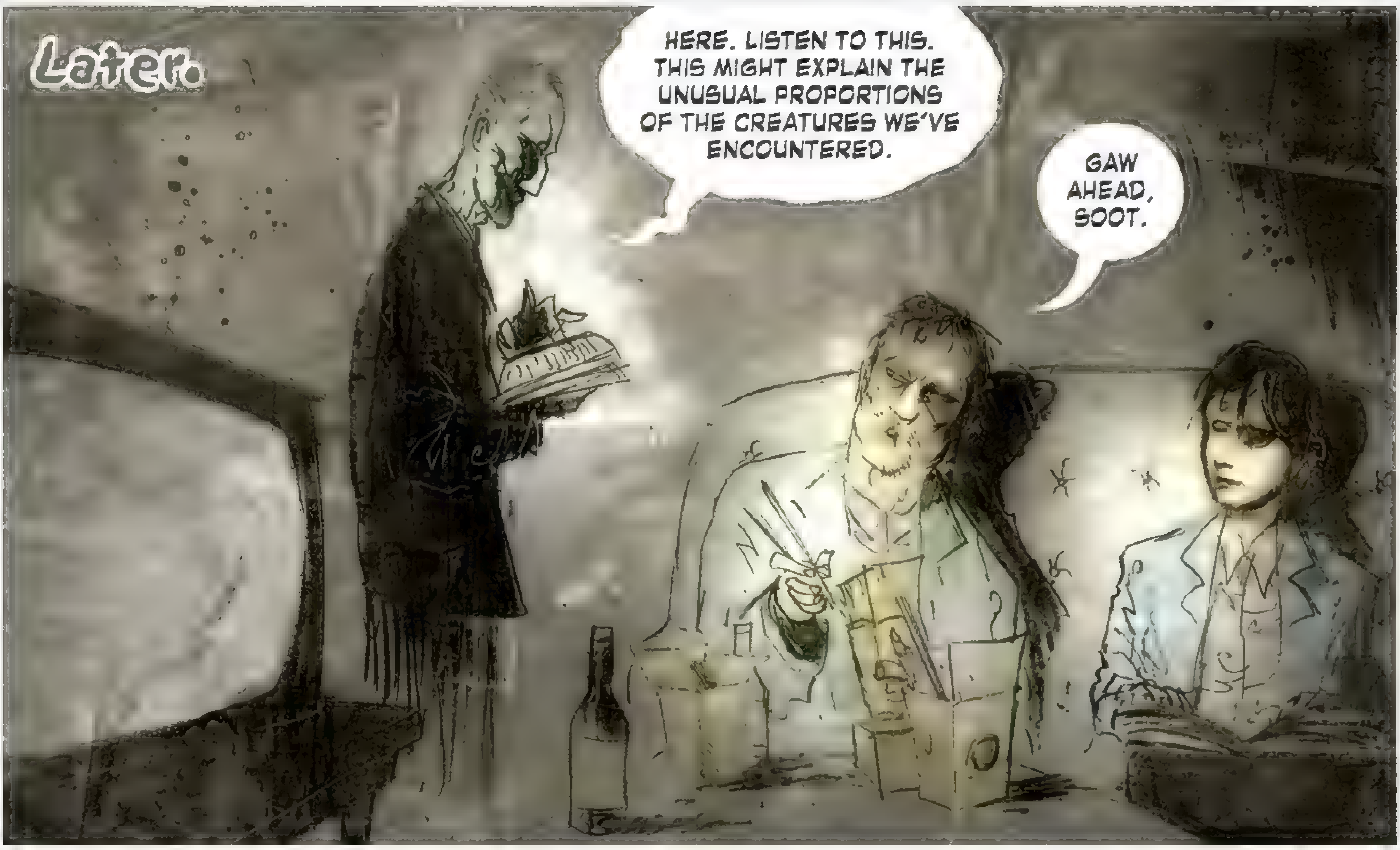
A GLIMMER OF LIGHT REFLECTED OFF A MAKESHIFT CROSS, AND JUST LIKE THAT, EVERYTHING I'D EVER KNOWN WAS PROVEN WRONG.
WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED.
I'D BE LYIN' IF I SAID I WAS SCARED, BUT I'D BE LYIN' AGAIN IF I SAID I DIDN'T FEEL A RUSH.
I'D KILLED ME A REAL, OLD-FASHIONED MONSTER.
CAN WE GO NOW?!
VA-ROOM!
NOW WHAT?
MY PLACE. I NEED A DRINK.

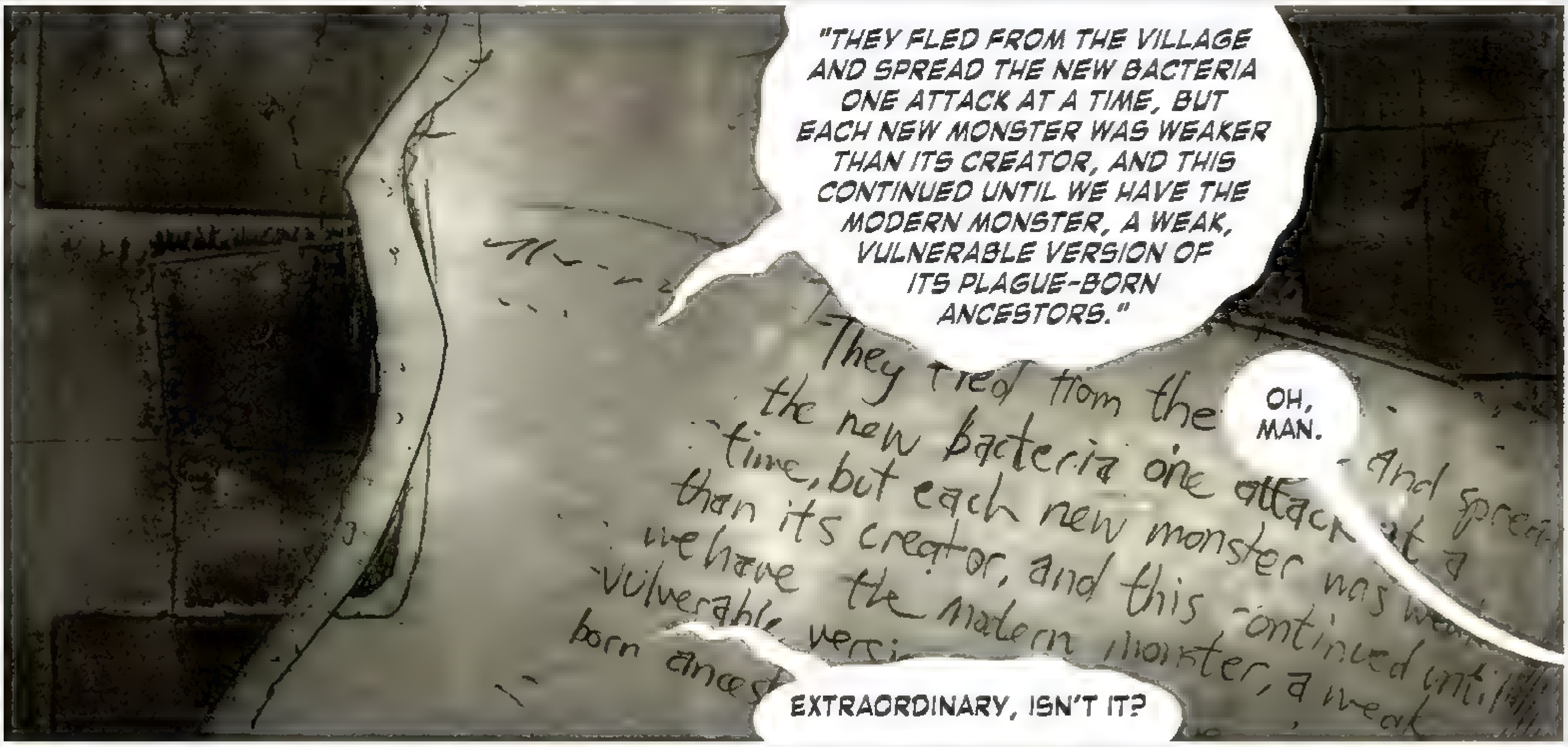
GOOD IDEA.
THEN WE FIND CRANDALL'S GRAVE.
...DID YOU SAY GRAVE?
THIS IS PROOF *THEY* EXIST. PROOF I'D LIKE TO SHOVE UP A LOT OF PEOPLE'S ASSES.
NICE TO SEE YOU'RE NOT BITTER.
BUT WHAT IS THIS CRAZY FUCK UP TO?
WHAT CRAZY FUCK? CRANDALL? CAL, I'M NOT THE ONE WHO SHOT HIM, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE HE'S DEAD.
I DON'T THINK CRANDALL'S DEAD. NOT ANYMORE.
SZKKKK
WHAT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *NOT ANYMORE?*
REMEMBER THE RED WELT ON THE CHEST OF THE CORPSE AT THE STATION? DID YOU NOTICE IT?
YEAH, SO?

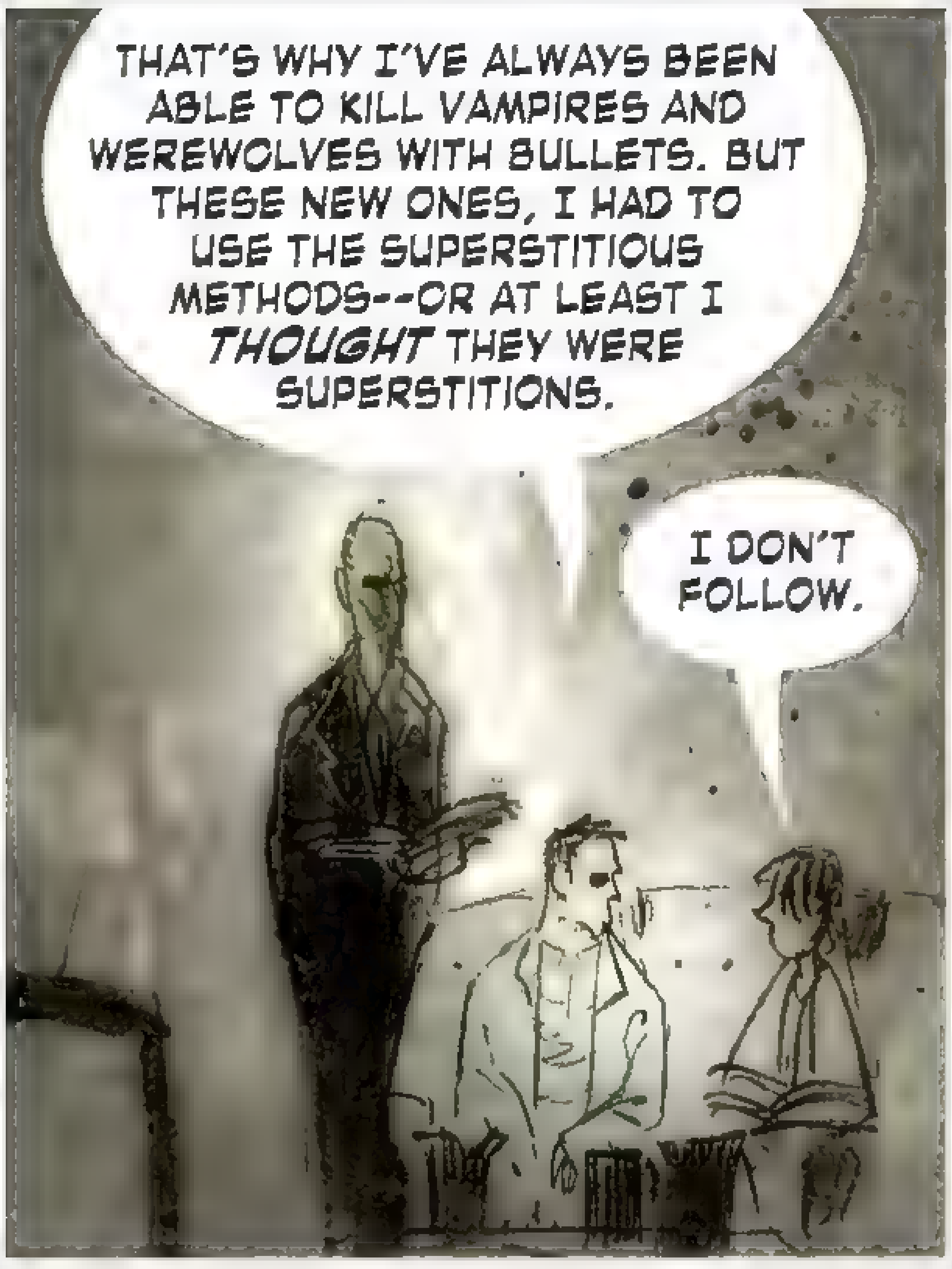
CRANDALL HAD A SIMILAR WELT ON HIS HAND AFTER I SHOT HIM.
YEAH, YOU SAID THAT.
WHATEVER AFFECTED THAT POOR GUY AT THE STATION, CRANDALL DID TO HIMSELF, AND IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ALL OF THIS--
THE PECULIAR ACTIVITIES, THE SAMPLE STOLEN FROM R.I.I.D.D., THE FLEAS, AND NOW THIS. HE'S BEHIND IT.
THIS COULD BE THE ANSWER.
VARDOOOOM!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE QUESTION IS.

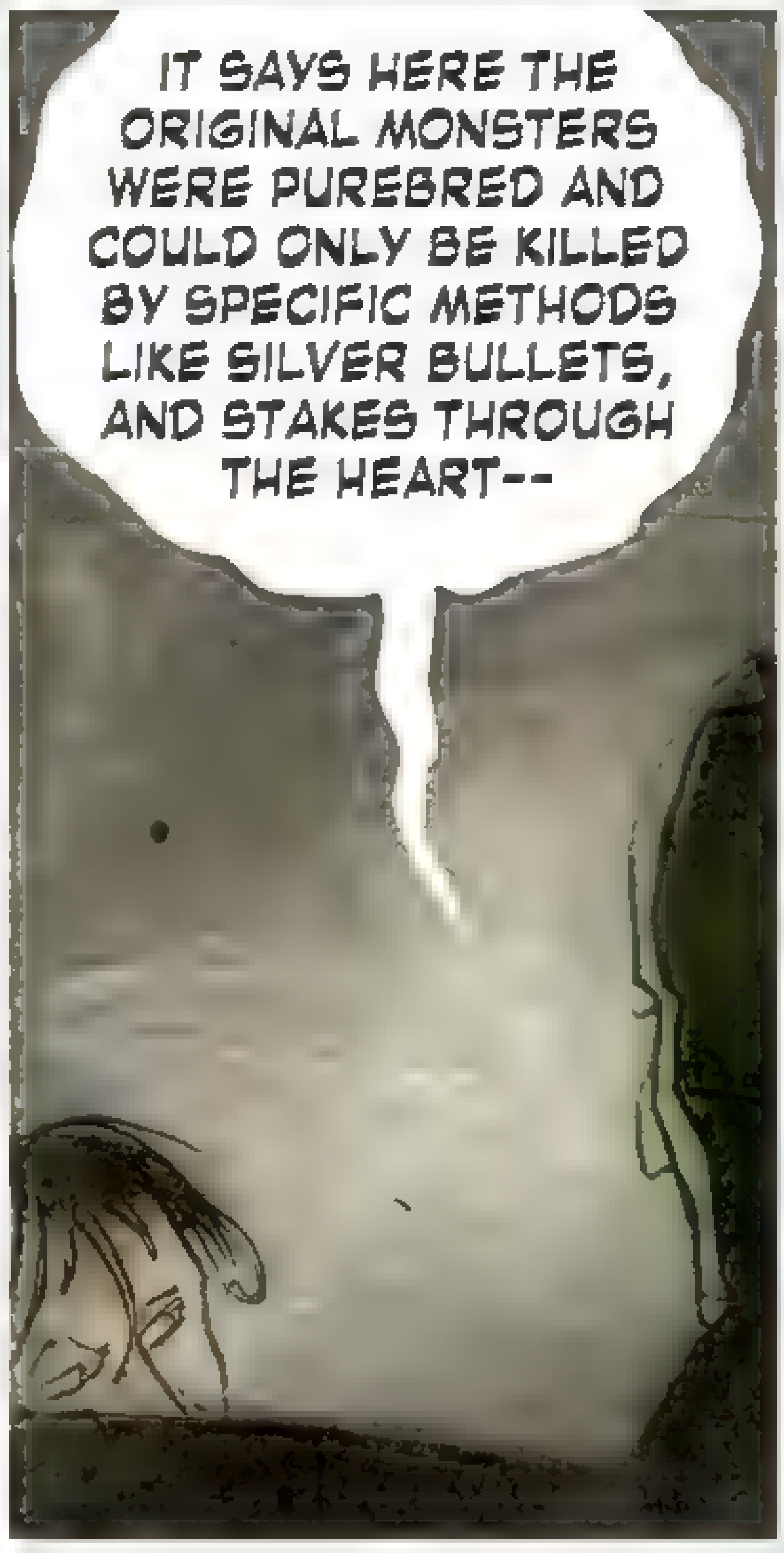
CAL?
MO'LOCK. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
NOTHING. WAITING FOR YOU.
WHAT'D *YOU* FIND OUT?
THE GHOULS REFUSED TO WAIT FOR YOU. THEY DECIDED TO GO INTO THE TUNNELS AND TAKE ON THE THREAT WITHOUT US.
LET 'EM. WE'VE GOT ALL WE CAN HANDLE UP HERE.
BUT THE SEWERS--
CAN WAIT. WE'VE GOT THREE MURDERS AND TWO ROBBERIES UP HERE. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT, ONE GHOUL WITH A BUMP ON HIS HEAD? LET'S TRY TO STAY FOCUSED. ANYWAY, WHEN YOU SEE WHAT'S IN THESE BOOKS, YOU'RE GONNA SHIT.

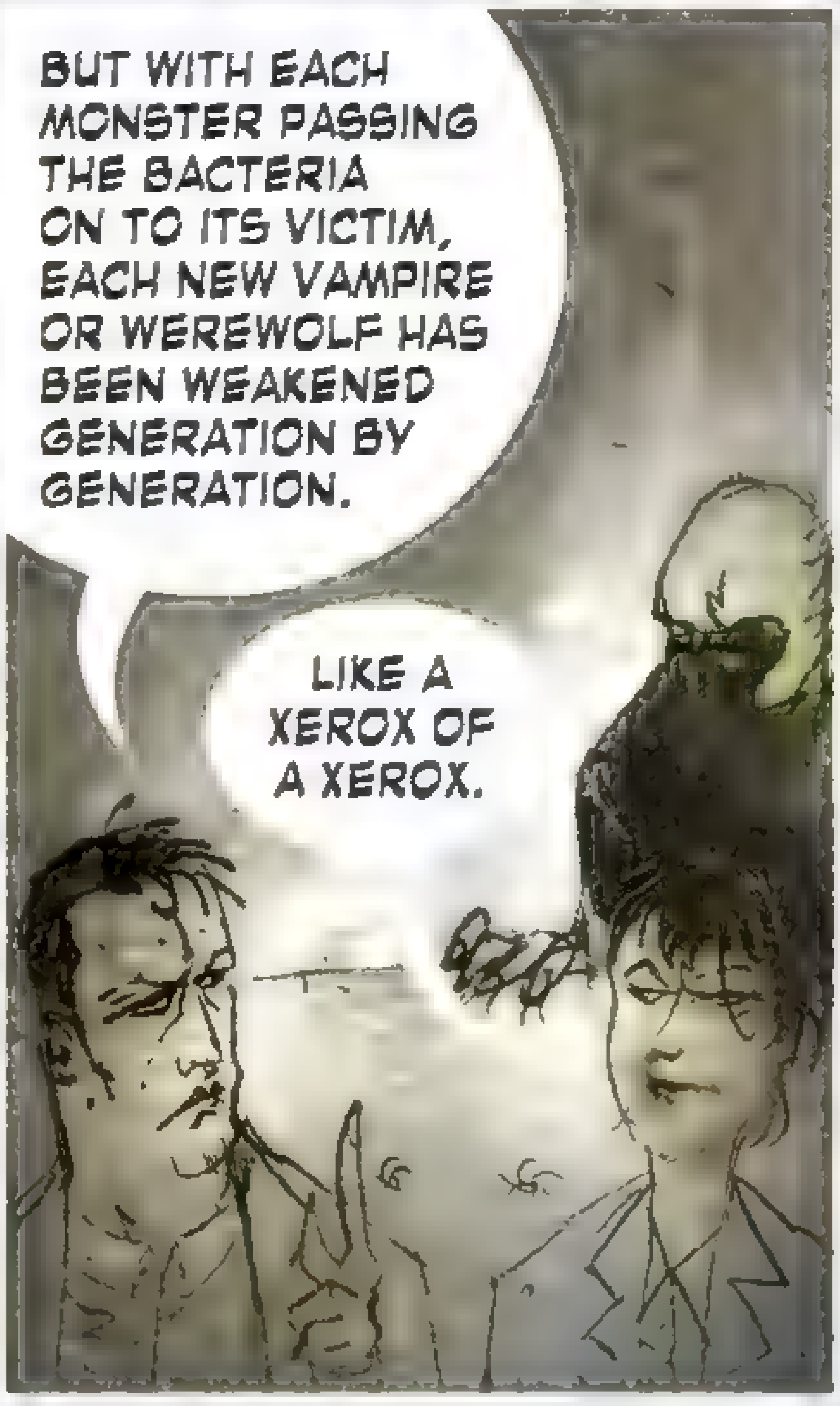
FASCINATING. BUT MONSTERS PREDATE THE MIDDLE AGES, AND THE PLAGUE. AT LEAST GHOULS DO.
I THOUGHT OF THAT, BUT IT STANDS TO REASON THAT WHAT HAPPENED ONCE CAN HAPPEN AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE POINT IS, THIS CRANDALL JACKASS MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE, AND HE KNOWS HOW TO MAKE SOME EXTREMELY POTENT CREATURES--
WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT *WHAT* HE'S DOING, *WHY*, AND *WHERE.*
WELCOME TO THE CLUB.
SHALL WE TOAST TO THE END OF MY CAREER?
LET'S HIT THESE BOOKS. BRUEGER, CAN YOU FIND OUT WHERE CRANDALL WAS BURIED?


Later.
HERE. LISTEN TO THIS. THIS MIGHT EXPLAIN THE UNUSUAL PROPORTIONS OF THE CREATURES WE'VE ENCOUNTERED.
GAW AHEAD, SOOT.


"THEY FLED FROM THE VILLAGE AND SPREAD THE NEW BACTERIA ONE ATTACK AT A TIME, BUT EACH NEW MONSTER WAS WEAKER THAN ITS CREATOR, AND THIS CONTINUED UNTIL WE HAVE THE MODERN MONSTER, A WEAK, VULNERABLE VERSION OF ITS PLAGUE-BORN ANCESTORS."
They fled from the
the new bacteria one attack at a
time, but each new monster was
than its creator, and this continued until
we have the modern monster, a weak
vulnerable
born ancest
OH, MAN.
EXTRAORDINARY, ISN'T IT?


THAT'S WHY I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO KILL VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES WITH BULLETS. BUT THESE NEW ONES, I HAD TO USE THE SUPERSTITIOUS METHODS--OR AT LEAST I *THOUGHT* THEY WERE SUPERSTITIONS.
I DON'T FOLLOW.


IT SAYS HERE THE ORIGINAL MONSTERS WERE PUREBRED AND COULD ONLY BE KILLED BY SPECIFIC METHODS LIKE SILVER BULLETS, AND STAKES THROUGH THE HEART--


BUT WITH EACH MONSTER PASSING THE BACTERIA ON TO ITS VICTIM, EACH NEW VAMPIRE OR WEREWOLF HAS BEEN WEAKENED GENERATION BY GENERATION.
LIKE A XEROX OF A XEROX.

WHAT IF YOU HAD THE ABILITY TO BRING THESE ORIGINAL, PUREBRED CREATURES BACK IN UNLIMITED NUMBERS?
IT COULD SPREAD QUICKLY. HUMANS COULD BE OUTNUMBERED AND OVERPOWERED BEFORE ANYBODY KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING. THE BLACK PLAGUE AFFECTED OVER FORTY MILLION PEOPLE. IMAGINE IF EACH ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE BECOMES A CREATURE THAT FEEDS ON HUMANS.
TOTAL EXTINCTION. A WORLD OF MONSTERS.
THUD!
YOU EXPECTING ANYONE, MO?
NO.
CAL MCDONALD! MO'LOCK! PLEASE, LET ME IN!
IT'S TABITHA... A GHOUL.
WELL, WHAT THE HELL DOES SHE WAN--

YOW!
THE S-SEWERS.
I'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR THAT.
WE WENT DEEP IN THE TUNNELS. THERE ARE OTHERS. WE BROKE UP INTO GROUPS...
TAKE IT EASY. HERE, LIE DOWN.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE OTHERS ARE. THEY ARE ARMED, HEAVILY. WE STOLE FROM A POLICE ARMORY. WE WERE SO FRIGHTENED. I'M SO SORRY.
THAT'S ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.
OH GOD.
THE BOW TIE...
...AND THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A SUBWAY CAR LOADED WITH PASSENGERS HAS AUTHORITIES COMPLETELY BAFFLED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE BEEP IS GOING ON! DO I LOOK LIKE I BEEP KNOW WHAT'S BEEP GOING ON? BEEP SUBWAY CAR FULL OF BEEP PEOPLE IS BEEP MISSING! I GOT A BEEP MISSING POLICE CAPTAIN! NOBODY BEEP KNOWS WHAT THE BEEP IS BEEP GOING ON!
CBR

THE COMMUTERS. GOOD LORD...THEY'RE BEING TURNED INTO MONSTERS!
DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER NEED THESE.
Special SILVER BULLETS...
SPECIAL SILVER
TAKE THIS.
IF YOU SAY SO.
LOAD UP. AFTER WE SPIN BY THE CEMETERY, WE'RE HEADING INTO THE SEWERS TO HUNT US A DEAD MAN.
SPECIAL SILVER

READY?
I'M STILL WAITING FOR YOU.
LET'S GO HUNTING.
SLAMM!

UM...
I'LL JUST WAIT HERE, THEN.

MAYNARD CRANDALL. HE FOLLOWED THE ULTIMATE DREAM OF A MAN OBSESSED WITH MONSTERS ... HE *BECAME* ONE.
R.I.P. MAYNARD CRANDALL
AND NOW HE WANTS TO RELEASE WHAT TRANSFORMED HIM ON THE ENTIRE WORLD.
WHAT A DICK.
YOU SURE YOU'RE UP FOR THIS? ME AND MO'LOCK HERE CAN HANDLE IT.
THERE'S GOT TO BE AT LEAST ONE SOBER, LIVING, HUMAN BEING ALONG. I'M IN.
I WANT TO MAKE A STOP ON THE WAY.
WHERE ARE WE HEADED?
THE SEWERS, MISS BRUEGER. THE SEWERS.
WHERE ELSE?

SO WHEN CAL CALLS YOU DEAD BOY... DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE ...
DEAD? YES, MA'AM. I'VE BEEN DECEASED FOR A LONG TIME.
I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND ALL THE DRINKING AND PILL POPPING.
YES, MA'AM.
GET IT?
GOT IT.
GOOD.
SO WHAT WERE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?
NOTHING.

OH GOOD, IT'S FULL OF SLIME. I HOPE IT'S CHUNKY STYLE.
WHICH WAY?
TABITHA SAID THEY WERE HEADED TOWARD UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, SO IT WOULD BE... *THAT WAY.*
THIS IS DISGUSTING.
THIS IS NOTHING. WAIT UNTIL WE REACH THE RAW SEWAGE.
A HIDDEN, SECRET, HAND-DUG PASSAGE. DO THEY ALL USE THE SAME BAD-GUY MANUAL?
IT WOULD APPEAR SO.
YOU FEEL THAT, MO?
EYES ARE ON US. THEY KNOW WE ARE HERE.
OKAY, GUYS. IF YOU'RE TRYING TO FREAK ME OUT, IT'S WORKING.

PLEASE... I HAVE A WIFE AND KID.
YEAH, WELL, SOON YOU'LL BE CALLING THEM LUNCH AND DINNER. HOLD STILL!
IT'S JUST A HARMLESS LITTLE FLEA!
NEXT!

YIKES.
OHMYGOD.
MO'LOCK, IS THAT YOU? STEP CLOSER SO WE CAN SEE YOU.
YES, EMEK. IT'S ME. WHAT HAPPENED?
WE WERE ATTACKED BY... CREATURES... EXTRAORDINARY CREATURES.
THESE WERE CREATURES I'VE ONLY HEARD OF IN LEGEND. HUGE! THEY CANNOT BE STOPPED. THEY DID THIS TO US BECAUSE WE WOULD NOT JOIN THEM.
THEY STUCK US HERE TO WARN YOU, CAL MCDONALD. THEY KNOW YOU ARE COMING.
IF THEY'RE WARNING, THEN THEY'RE SCARED.
DON'T BE SO SURE OF YOURSELF, DETECTIVE. IF THEY CAN DO THIS TO US, THEY CAN DO FAR WORSE TO YOU. THEY ARE MULTIPLYING AS WE SPEAK.
THANKS FOR THE TIP.
FREAKY, AIN'T IT?
TH-THE HEADS T... TALKING.

I ACTED RASHLY, BROTHER. PLEASE FORGIVE ME.
YOU ACTED IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
IT IS I WHO SHOULD ASK FORGIVENESS FROM YOU.
I WILL EXACT REVENGE.
I COULD ASK FOR NOTHING MORE. THANK YOU.
GIVE THEM HELL, BROTHER!
≈SIGH≈
CHRIST, IS THIS AN UNDERGROUND PASSAGE OR A GODDAMN *MAZE?*
HOLD UP. THERE'S SOMETHING AHEAD.
I DO AS WELL.
GOT YOU COVERED.

WHEW.
MISS. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I'M A POLICE OFFICER. EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE.
THANK YOU, MY DEAR. I'M AFRAID I'VE BEEN...
HMMMM?
I'VE BEEN...≥COUGH≤... I'VE BEEN ... EXCUSE ME...I SEEM TO HAVE SOMETHING CAUGHT IN MY ...
MISS?

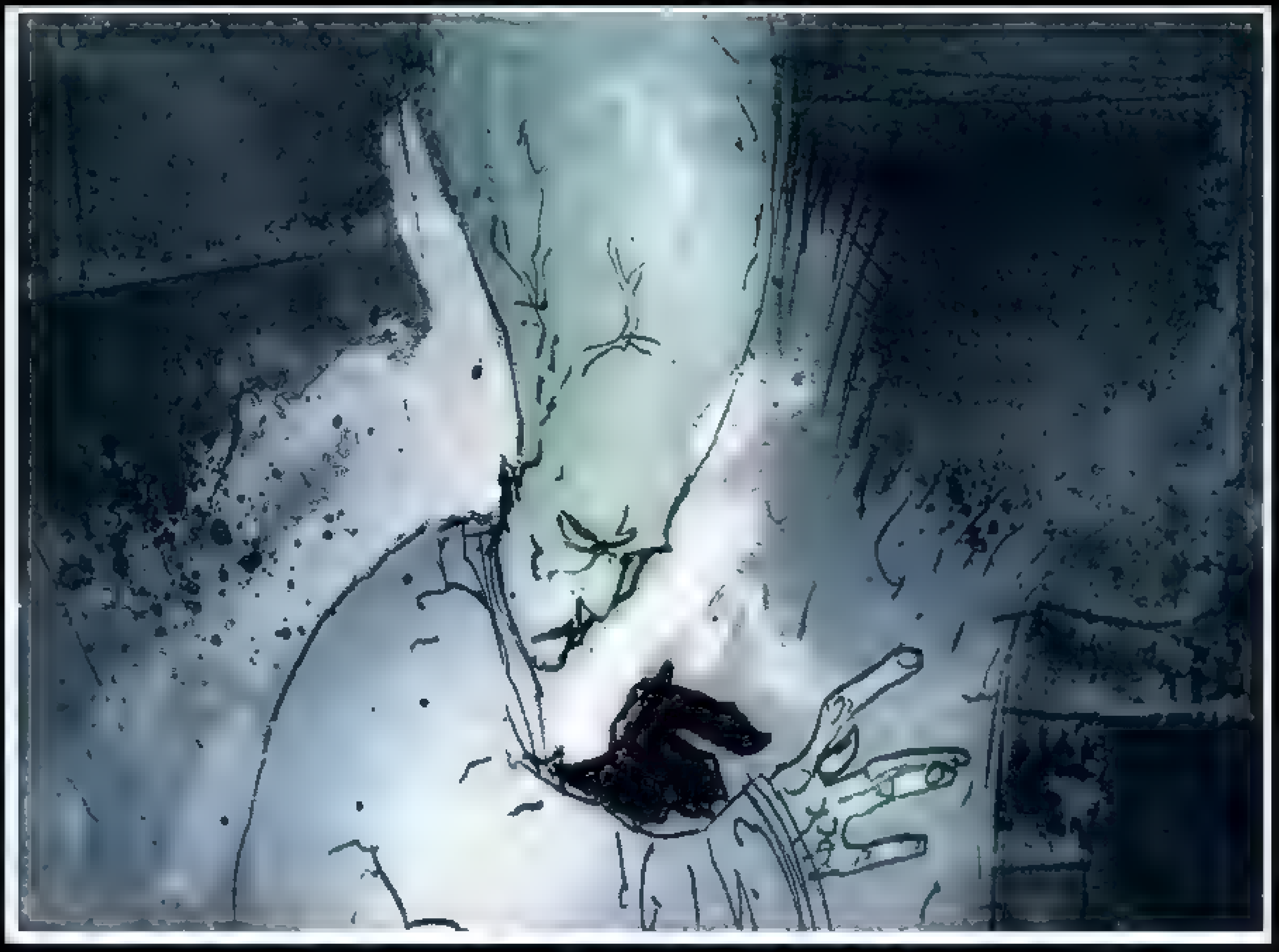
ARRRRRHHHH!
ARRRRHHHH!
BLAM!
BLAM!
HOLY CRAP! NOTHING'S WORKING!
BLAM!
TRY SOMETHING RELIGIOUS!
ARRRRHHHH!
HOW ABOUT THIS?! HAH!
GULP
DO SOMETHING!
LIKE WHAT!?

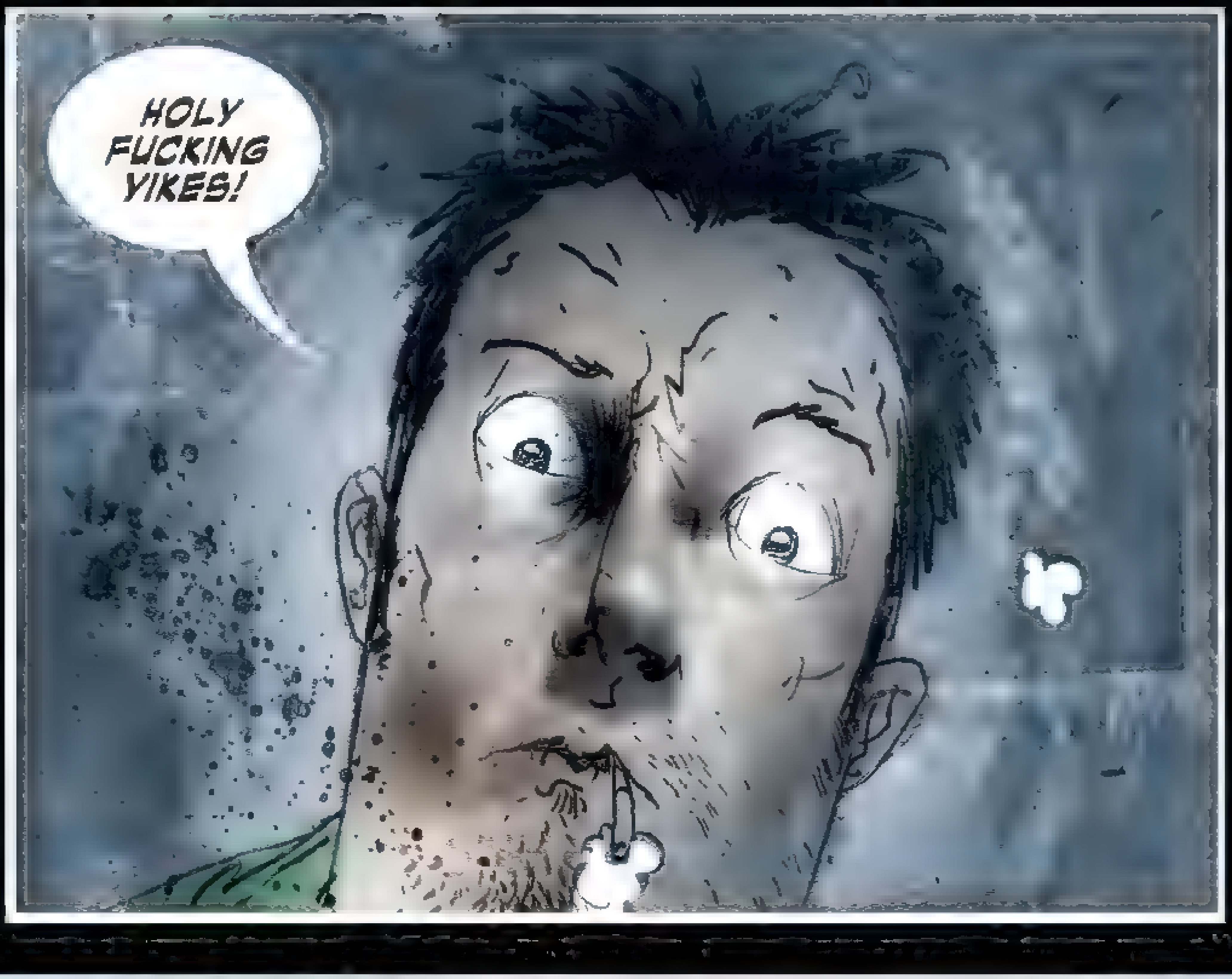
MRAW?
MMMRRRAAAWWW!
RIIIIIIP!
THAT *ALWAYS* WORKS.
YOU, MY FRIEND, ARE A TOTAL FREAK!
THANK YOU.

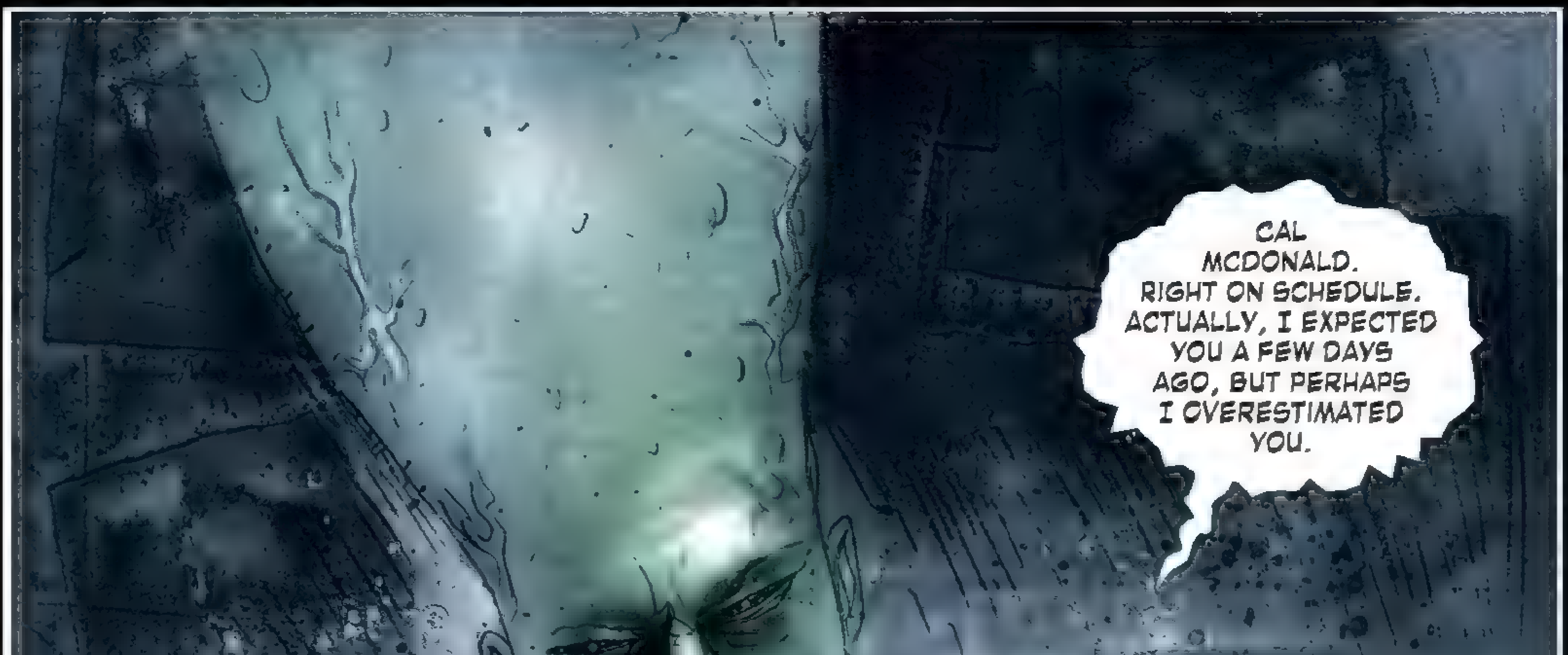
I GUESS THIS IS IT. ALL THESE TUNNELS, THESE FREAKS MUST BE IN GREAT SHAPE.
HOW 'BOUT I SHOW YOU!
DON'T SHOOT. WE'LL ALERT THE OTHERS.
I DON'T NEED THE OTHERS TO DEAL WITH YOU.
COME ON! TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT! I'M INDESTRUCTIBLE NOW!
DOIK
OH.
THIS SUPER-STITIOUS CRAP IS KIND OF COOL.
DID YOU SEE THAT?
I'M PROUD OF YA.

Meanwhile...
I THINK IT WAS ABOUT THE TIME I SAW THE CHAMBER THAT I REALIZED WHAT A FUCKING IDIOT I WAS.
I HAD PUT ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER, BUT I HADN'T REALIZED THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PICTURE.
THIS WASN'T JUST SOME MAD SCIENTIST *ATTEMPTING* THE IMPOSSIBLE. THIS CRAZY GEEK CRANDALL HAD *DONE* IT.
BRING ME THE NEXT SUBJECT.
HE'D UNCOVERED THE SECRET TO THE CREATION OF THE ORIGINAL MONSTER STRAIN INSIDE A TINY, RARE FLEA.
BANG!
CRANDALL HAD TO BE STOPPED BEFORE THE MODERN WORLD FELL TO A MEDIEVAL DISEASE.

THAT'S WHERE I COME IN.
MY NAME'S CAL MCDONALD. I HUNT MONSTERS.
HEADS UP, FREAKS! PARTY'S OVER.
AND ON THIS DAY, MILES BENEATH LOS ANGELES, I HAD ME A WHOLE MESS OF MONSTERS TO KILL.
COME ON OUT OF THE SHADOWS, CRANDALL.




HOLY FUCKING YIKES!


CAL MCDONALD. RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. ACTUALLY, I EXPECTED YOU A FEW DAYS AGO, BUT PERHAPS I OVERESTIMATED YOU.

TED, YOU FAILED TO KILL THE DETECTIVE BEFORE. NOW IS YOUR CHANCE FOR REDEMPTION. **GET HIM!**
RIGHT! ROOOOOAAAAR-SNORT!
SORRY, THEODORE. HAVE A LITTLE **SILVER!**
BLAMM!
BUT YOU SAID I COULDN'T DIIIII--
THUD!
VERY RESOURCEFUL. I SEE YOU'VE FIGURED OUT MY LITTLE SECRET-- BUT ALL THE SILVER AND STAKES IN THE WORLD WON'T STOP A CROWD.
WHOA... STEADY.

BLAMM! BLAMM!
THEY'RE CLOSING IN!
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING.
KILL'EM, KILL'EM, KILL'EM!
BLAMM!
OUTNUMBERED. DIDN'T PLAN ON THAT, MCDONALD, DID YOU?
THAT'S WHERE I HAVE YOU FOOLED. I DON'T HAVE A PLAN.

THE GHOULS OF LOS ANGELES HAVE YOUR BACK, CAL MCDONALD.
I'M GOING AFTER CRANDALL.
I'LL GET THE HOSTAGES OUT.
GIVE IT UP, CRANDALL. I KILLED YOU ONCE. I'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO DO IT AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, LITTLE HEAD!

IT'S OVER, CRANDALL. SERIOUSLY.
OH, NO. IT'S FAR FROM OVER, DETECTIVE. YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT I HAVE HERE. THESE FLEAS. MY PRECIOUS FLEAS WILL DO THE JOB ON THEIR OWN.
THEY WILL RUN AND SPREAD WHAT THEY CARRY INSIDE THEM, AND SOON ALL THE WORLD WILL BE *IMMORTAL CREATURES* AS I HAVE BECOME. THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE WILL WITHER AND DIE, AND THEY WILL REGRET HOW THEY TREATED ME.
TELL ME THIS ISN'T ABOUT REVENGE.
IT'S SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT. BEFORE I WAS WEAK AND VULNERABLE TO PEOPLE'S CRUELTY. NOW, THANKS TO MY GENIUS, I AM IMMORTAL, POWERFUL... PERFECTION.
AND FULL OF SHIT.
YOU WERE A LOSER BEFORE, AND YOU'RE A LOSER NOW. THAT BIG-ASS HEAD DOESN'T CHANGE A THING.
YOU'LL SEE! THEY'LL ALL SEE!
BRUEGER, GET THOSE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE! CRANDALL, QUIT WITH THE EVIL-GUY QUIPS AND REMOVE YOUR HANDS FROM THAT LID!

NICE WORK, LIEUTENANT.
YOU TOO, MO'LOCK.
THE BEAUTIFUL PART OF THIS IS NOW YOU'LL BE ONE OF US. IRONIC. THE MONSTER HUNTER TURNED MONSTER.
I'VE BEEN ONE BEFORE. DIDN'T LIKE IT.
NOW REMOVE YOUR HAND OR I'M GONNA POP THAT KING-SIZED CRANIUM LIKE A PIMPLE!
MOTHERFUCKER!
CLIK!
PERFECTION! YOU HAD YOUR DAY, MCDONALD. BUT THIS DAY BELONGS *TO THE MONSTERS*.
AH, HA!
AAAHHHHHHHH!!

AAAAHHHHHHHH!!
AAAAHHHHHHHH!!
AAAAHHHHHHHH!!
HA YOURSELF, DIPSHIT!
A FLEA BE GONE!
AHHHHHHHHHH! MY EYES!

OOOOH NOOOO!
HEEEELP MEEEEE!
FAT CHANCE OF THAT, CRANDALL. YOUR THUGS ARE RUNNING FOR THE HILLS.
IIIIIIIIT HUUUUURTS!

MO'LOCK! GET OUT OF HERE! THE FREAK'S GONNA BLOW!
I'M STAYING.
GET OUT OF HERE NOW! GET EVERYBODY OUT OF HERE!
THIS WHOLE PLACE IS COMING DOWN!
GODDAMMIT. STUCK.

CAL! CAL, WHERE ARE YOU?!
BROTHER, THE HUMAN CANNOT BE SAVED. YOU MUST SAVE YOURSELF!
ERK.
YOUR PLAN HAS BACKFIRED, MCDONALD. YOU HAVE ONLY MADE ME MORE POWERFUL!
I...TOLD... YOU...I DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN!
YOU RUINED EVERYTHING.
IT WAS GOING TO BE SO PERFECT. BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS ROAMING FREE, NOT HAVING TO HIDE IN THE SHADOWS FROM THE LIKES OF YOU.
NOW, WE DIE TOGETHER.

SHUT... UP!
DIEEEEE...!!!
ONE THING I CAN'T STAND...
CLICK
SURE, I COULD HAVE JUST LAID BACK AND DIED RIGHT THERE.
...IS A BAD GUY WHO TALKS TOO MUCH!
AHHHHH! STOP! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE, SHITBAG...EVEN IF I HAVE TO GO *THROUGH* YOUR UGLY ASS!
CHRIST, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER TO JUST DIE.

NOOOOOOOOO!
I THINK ONE OF THE KEY THINGS I'VE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS IS *THERE ARE NO RULES* WHEN IT COMES TO KILLING FREAKS.
SURE, SOME DIE FROM A BULLET TO THE HEAD, SOME BY BURNING, AND EVIDENTLY SOME BY THE ORIGINAL SUPERSTITIONS LIKE STAKES AND SILVER BULLETS.
THE KEY IS TO IMPROVISE.
THE KEY IS TO ADAPT TO THE SITUATION AND DESTROY THE THREAT BY ANY MEANS AT HAND.

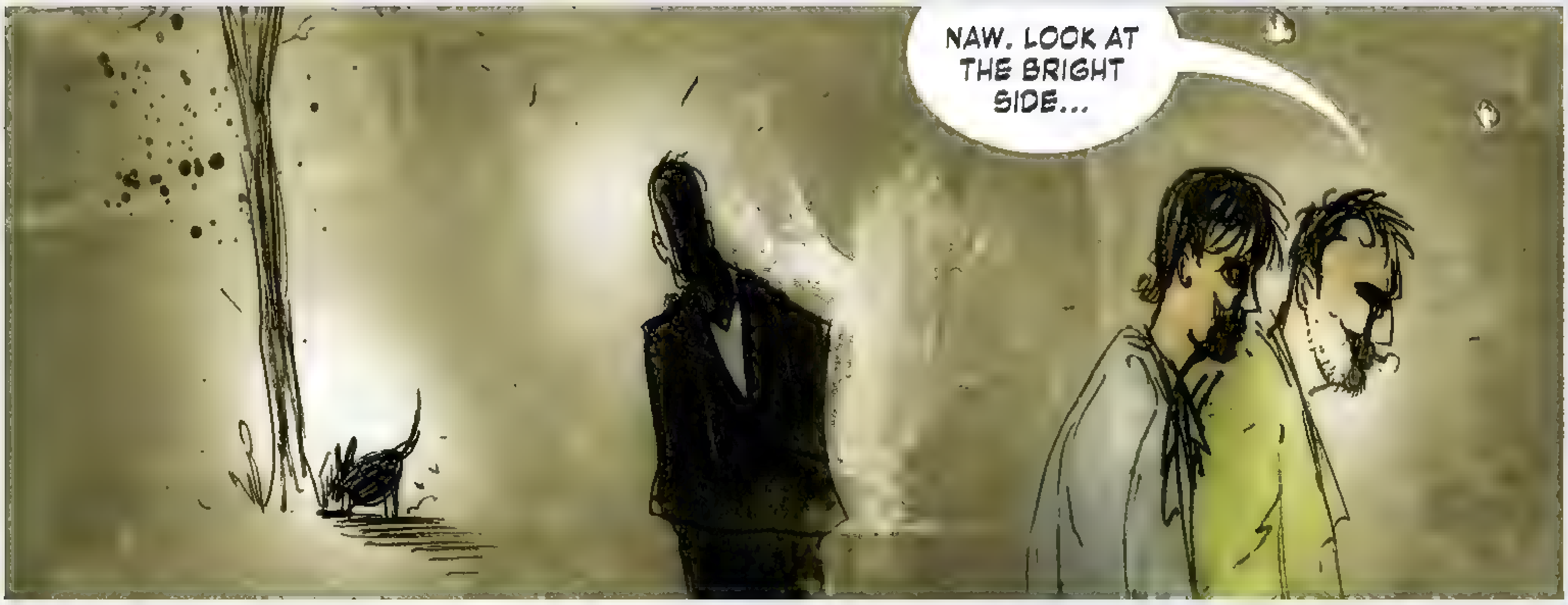
AAHHHHHHHHH!
I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT THESE SIMPLE RULES, AND IT ALMOST KILLED ME.
SO THERE ARE BIGGER, FASTER, STRONGER MONSTERS OUT THERE NOW.
FLOOOOOSH!
SO WHAT?
I'LL STILL KILL EVERY LAST DAMN ONE OF THEM.

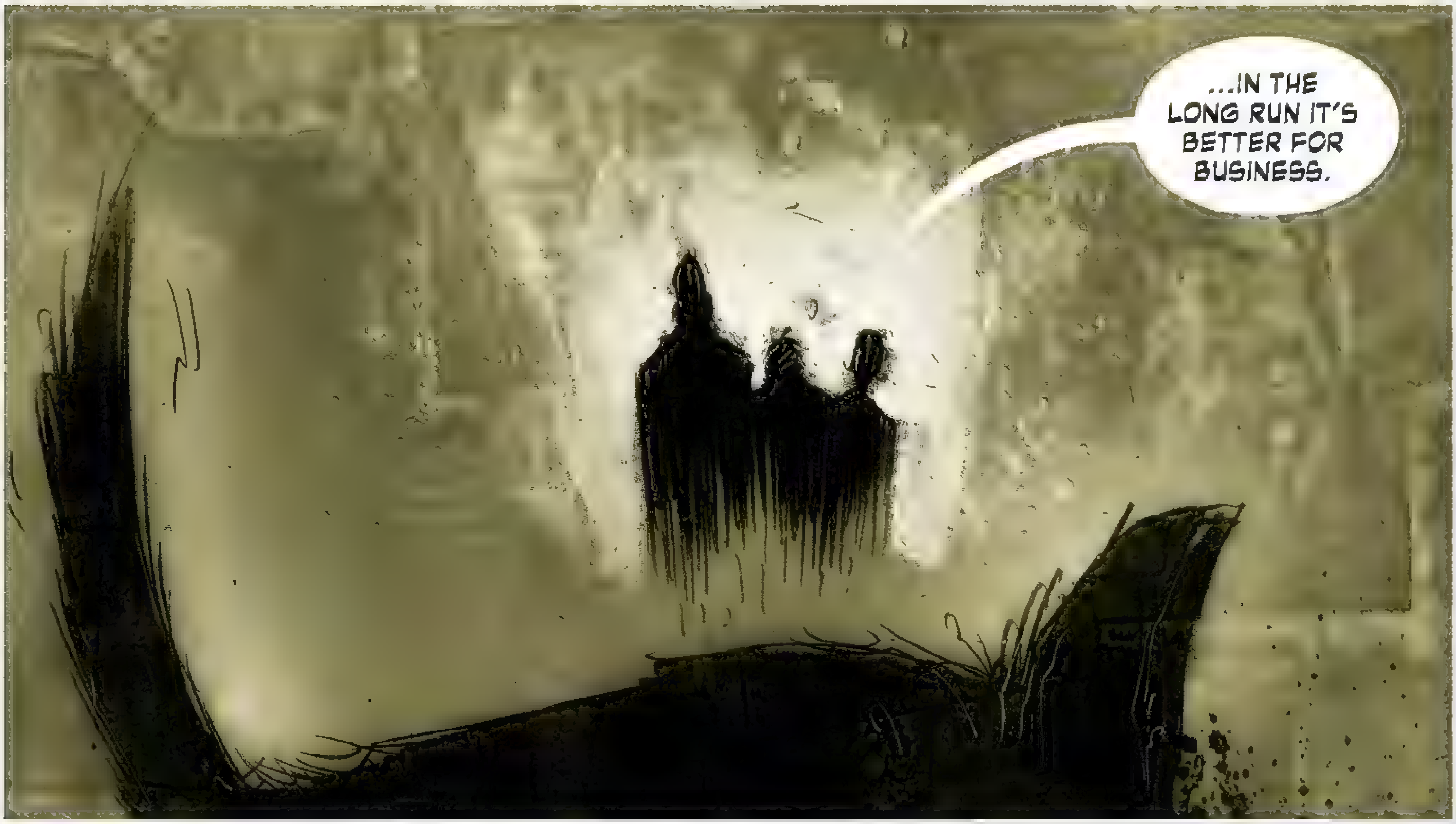
PREMIERE TONIGHT!
HELL PRE-TEEN
WHOOOOSH
PANG
AAAAAAHHHH!
KLANG!
OOF!
THUD!
WHOOOSH!
BAD... ASS!

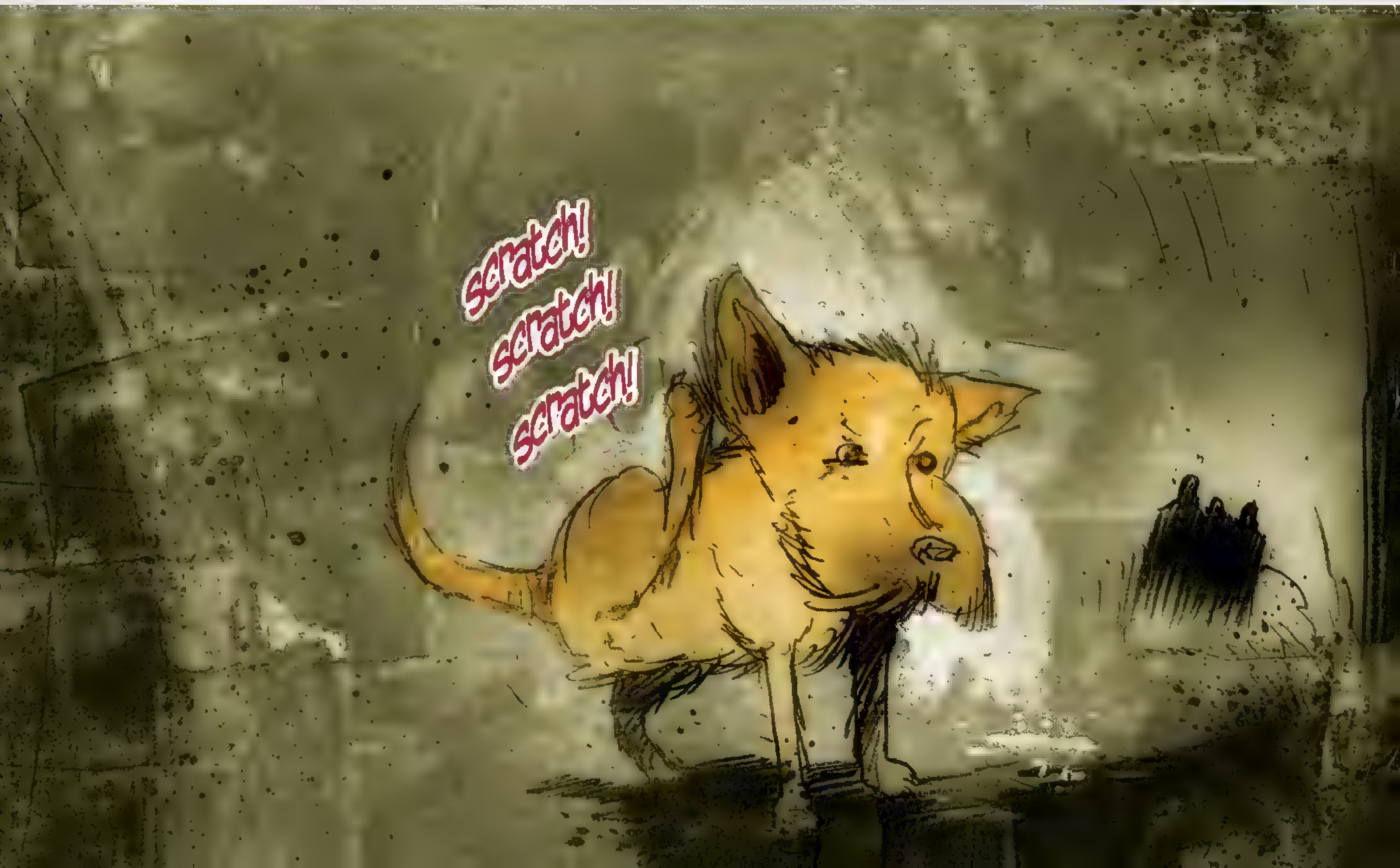
AND THERE IT IS. CASE CLOSED. FREAKS DEAD.
WHEN I WOKE UP, I WAS HERE WITH YOU NICE BOYS.
MCDONALD, YOU'RE GOING DOWN SO HARD, YOU'RE NOT EVEN GONNA KNOW WHAT HIT YOU.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT?
I'M GOING TO ENJOY WATCHING YOUR LYING ASS FRY.
HA HA HA HA HA

WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE?
THIS MAN ISN'T A SUSPECT. WHAT KIND OF BULLSHIT PRECINCT ARE YOU RUNNING HERE? RELEASE HIM NOW, AND I WANT FULL REPORTS--COMPLETE WITH APOLOGIES--ON MY DESK BY MORNING.
BUT WE THOUGHT--
SHUT UP WHILE YOU STILL HAVE A BADGE, SERGEANT.
MR. MCDONALD... MEET ME OUTSIDE WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH HERE.
THANKS FOR THE TIME, BOYS. IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE, AS USUAL.
SLAM!

CRANDALL?
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?
DEAD.
THE TUNNELS CAVED IN. NOBODY COULD HAVE SURVIVED.
THE SUBWAY PASSENGERS ARE ALL OKAY, THE ONES THAT MADE IT. THEY'RE SPOUTING THEIR STORY TO ANYBODY WHO WILL LISTEN.
IT WON'T MATTER.
NOBODY WILL BELIEVE THEM. TRUST ME ON THAT. AFTER A WHILE THEY'LL STOP TELLING THE STORY, AND SOONER OR LATER EVEN THEY'LL DOUBT IT HAPPENED.
YOU THINK SOME--OF THOSE THINGS GOT AWAY?
I'M SURE OF IT. IF WE MADE IT OUT, IT STANDS TO REASON, SOME OF THEM DID. GOD KNOWS HOW MANY.
AREN'T YOU WORRIED?


NAW. LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE...


...IN THE LONG RUN IT'S BETTER FOR BUSINESS.


scratch!
scratch!
scratch!

A LETTER FROM B.S.

story
STEVE NILES

art
BEN TEMPLESMITH

letters
PAT BROSSEAU

A LETTER FROM B.S.

I'D JUST GOTTEN THE SHIT KICKED OUT OF ME BY A GOLEM CREATED BY A GUY LOOKING FOR VENGEANCE. THAT'S WHY PEOPLE USUALLY CREATE GOLEMS THESE DAYS.
I MANAGED TO STOP THE CREATURE, BUT NOT BEFORE IT HAD SLAMMED ME ALL OVER DOWNTOWN.
GOOD THING I STAY WELL VERSED IN SPELLS AND INCANTATIONS. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP A GOLEM.
PEOPLE MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF MAGIC SPELLS, BUT THE TRUTH IS, INCANTATIONS ARE JUST PHONE NUMBERS TO OTHER WORLDS WHICH ARE AS REAL AS THIS ONE.
I WAS PLANNING ON LAPSING INTO A DRUG-INDUCED COMA, BUT THEN I GOT THIS LETTER.
I WASN'T PLANNING ON A TRIP, BUT SOME THINGS CAN'T BE SCHEDULED.
A LETTER FROM A DEAD MAN. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BE A GENIUS TO SEE THAT.

MR MCDONALD,

I HEARD AROUND THAT YOU ARE A MAN WHO CAN HELP A GUY LIKE ME. I'VE BEEN PATIENT SINCE THEY OFFED ME AND I THINK IT'S TIME THEY LET ME BACK IN. I UNDERSTAND THE WAY THINGS WORK. I UNDERSTAN IT WAS MY TIME TO GO. I SAW IT COMING. IN SOME WAYS I CAN SEE ~~WH~~ I NEEDED TO BE CLIPPED, BUT I MADE THIS FUCKIN' PLACE.

HELL, I DIED FOR IT.

I NEED A GUY WHO CAN UNDERSTAND MY POSITION, AND I HEARD YOU CAN DEAL WITH SITUATIONS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT OR HOW I CAN PAY, BUT I'LL OWE YOU MY ONE GOOD EYE IF YOU CAN GET ME BACK INSIDE.

B.S.

THE LETTER WAS POSTMARKED LAS VEGAS.
VEGAS IS A QUICK 45-MINUTE PLANE RIDE, SO I DECIDED TO CHECK IT OUT.
I LIKE IT HERE. IT'S OPEN 24-7 AND THERE AREN'T A LOT OF MONSTERS. THEY DON'T LIKE THE BRIGHT LIGHTS.
WHOEVER THIS B.S. WAS, HE DIDN'T TELL ME WHERE TO MEET HIM. IF HE WAS DEAD, HE'D FIND ME.
AND I WAS RIGHT.
CAL MCDONALD?
YIKES!

I AIN'T A PRETTY SIGHT, AM I? THEY MADE SURE I WAS DEAD, 'CUZ THEY KNEW IF I WASN'T, *THEY'D* BE.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN. CHRIST, EVER HEAR OF AN EYE PATCH?
BENJAMIN SIEGEL. THANKS FOR COMING.
NO PROBLEM. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
IT'S LIKE THIS, SEE. BEFORE I GOT OFFED--
BY MEYER LANSKY, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHAT SOME PEOPLE THINK, BUT IT WAS JUST SOME INVESTORS WHO DIDN'T WANT TO WAIT FOR THE VEGAS GRAVY TRAIN.
COME ON, LET'S WALK A BIT.
NOBODY CAN SEE YOU, RIGHT?
SO ALL THEY SEE IS MY DUMB ASS TALKING TO NOBODY.
THAT'S RIGHT, SMART GUY. ONE OF THE FEW BENEFITS OF BEING DEAD. I CHOOSE WHO SEES ME.
YEAH, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE CASE.
GREAT. LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
LIKE I SAID, BEFORE I GOT SPLATTERED ALL OVER MY LIVING ROOM, I HAD A GOOD THING GOING...WITH A WOMAN NAMED VIRGINIA.
SHE WAS IT, THE TOPS.

WELL, HERE'S THE THING, SEE? WHEN I GOT SMEARED I DIDN'T PASS ON. I WENT TO SYNAGOGUE, BUT I GUESS GOD THOUGHT I OFFED TOO MANY MUGS IN MY DAYS, SO HERE I AM...AND I CAN'T FIND VIRGINIA.
BUT I'M GUESSING YOU HAVE A HUNCH WHERE SHE IS.
SHE'S INSIDE THE FLAMINGO. SHE'S BEEN IN THERE SINCE SHE DIED--THEY WON'T LET HER OUT, AND THEY WON'T LET ME IN.
Flamin
AND YOU WANT ME TO GO IN AND GET HER. PROBLEM IS, SLICK, ONLY DEAD I CAN SEE IS YOU.
I CAN FIX THAT.
THERE!
HEY!
SMACK!
WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT?!
HUH?!

NOW YOUS CAN SEE EVERYTHING I SEE.
NASTY.
YEAH, IT AIN'T TOO PRETTY, I KNOW.
I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT, BUT I AIN'T MAKING NO PROMISES. WHAT'S SHE LOOK LIKE, ANYWAY?
YA CAN'T MISS HER. SHE'S BETTER LOOKING THAN CAROLE LOMBARD AND JOAN CRAWFORD *COMBINED!*
OKAY.
THIS WAS OUT OF MY ELEMENT. I WASN'T SOME CRUNCHY FREAK HELPING PEOPLE CONTACT THEIR LONG-DEAD GRANNY.
I DECIDED I'D SEE WHAT WAS WHAT AND THEN FIGURE OUT AN ANGLE.
BINGO.
'SCUSE ME. PARDON.

I'M LOOKING FOR A WOMAN NAMED VIRGINIA HILL.
WELL, IT'S YOUR LUCKY NIGHT, MISTER. WHAT CAN A LADY DO FOR YOU?
I'M HERE AT THE REQUEST OF BEN SIEGEL.
HE AIN'T ALLOWED IN THIS JOINT.
MY BEN?!
THAT RAT!
WELL, THE WAY I SEE IT, BEN WANTS TO SEE THE LADY, BUT HE CAN'T COME IN THE PLACE HE BUILT TO SEE HER. THAT SUCKS ASS IN MY BOOK, SO ME AND THE LADY ARE GOING TO TAKE A STROLL OUT OF HERE.
ANY OF YOU SWISS-CHEESE-LOOKING MOTHERFUCKERS HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR MAN, VIRGINIA?
YES...I DO, TERRIBLY.
THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO KNOW.
ARE YOU TALKING TO ME, SIR? WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLACE A BET?
NOT NOW.

IT'S YOUR MOVE, YEG.
OH GOOD, THE FLUNKY'S GONNA LEARN US.
LET ME TELL YOU GUYS SOMETHING YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW.
YOU BOYS ARE ALREADY DEAD, RIGHT? I CAN SEE THAT. YOU KNOW IT. WHAT YOU MUGS DON'T KNOW IS THAT YOU *SHOULD* BE IN HELL BEING ROASTED TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY AND PAYING FOR THE CRIMES YOU COMMITTED AGAINST YOUR FELLOW MAN.
GET TO THE POINT BEFORE WE VENTILATE YOU.
THE POINT IS, I KNOW THE WORDS THAT WILL BRING A *DEMON* STRAIGHT UP *FROM HELL* AND COLLECT WHAT THEY MISSED THE FIRST TIME AROUND, SO EITHER YOU MAKE A NICE PATH FOR ME AND THE LADY, OR I START SINGING.
YOU'RE BLUFFING.
TRY ME.
SMART PLAY, BOYS. THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS A RED-HOT PITCHFORK UP YOUR ASS.
EXIT

MR. MCDONALD. YOU ARE A MAN OF YOUR WORD. I WISH THERE WAS SOME WAY I COULD REPAY YOU.
YOU COULD START BY MAKING IT SO I DON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT TEN MILLION DEAD PEOPLE.
SMAK
THANKS.
TAKE THIS. I HID SOME STUFF-- CASH AND GUNS, IN LOS ANGELES. IF IT'S THERE, IT'S YOURS.
The End

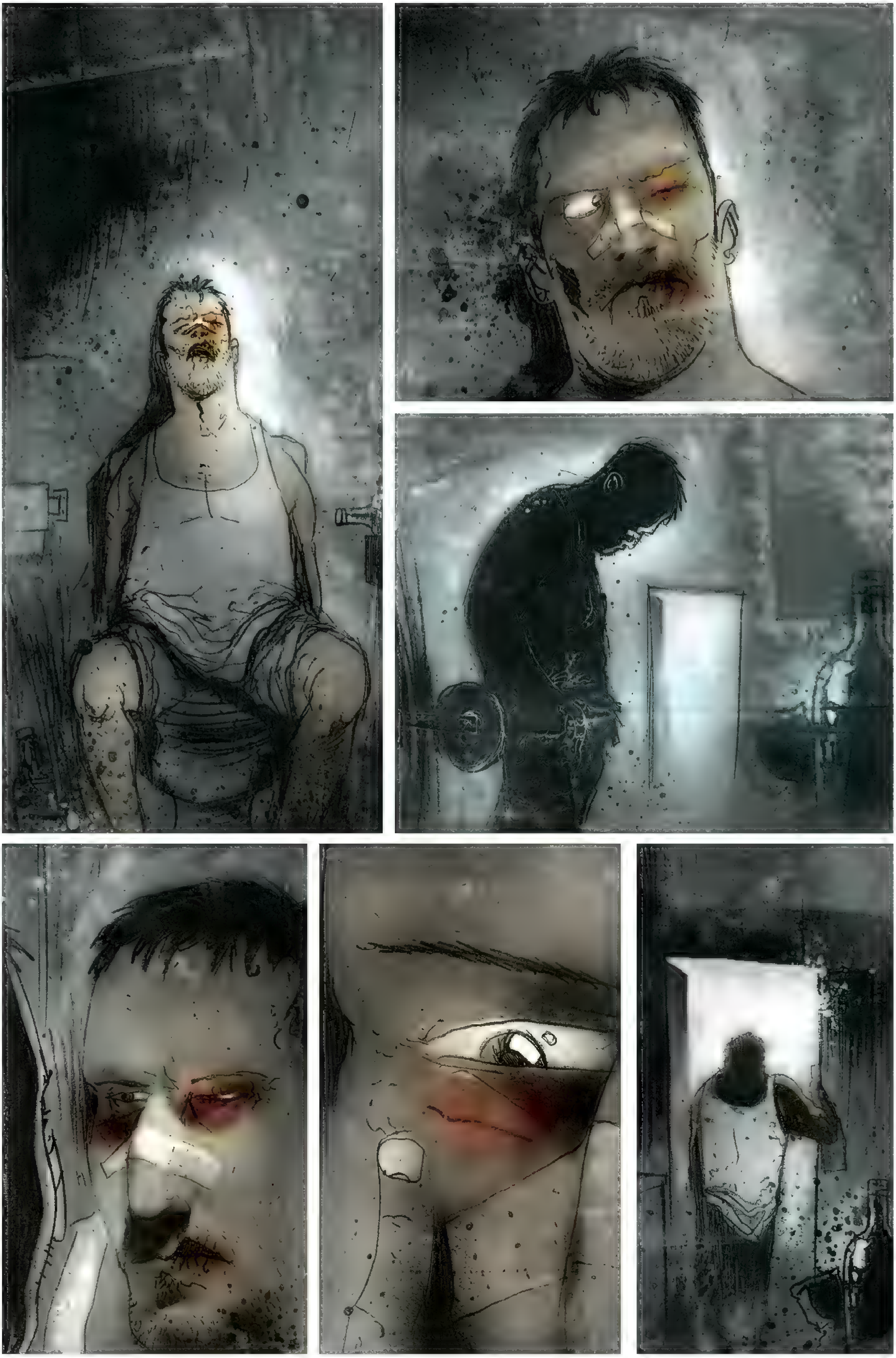
LOVE ME TENDERLOIN

Ben 2003
Templesmith

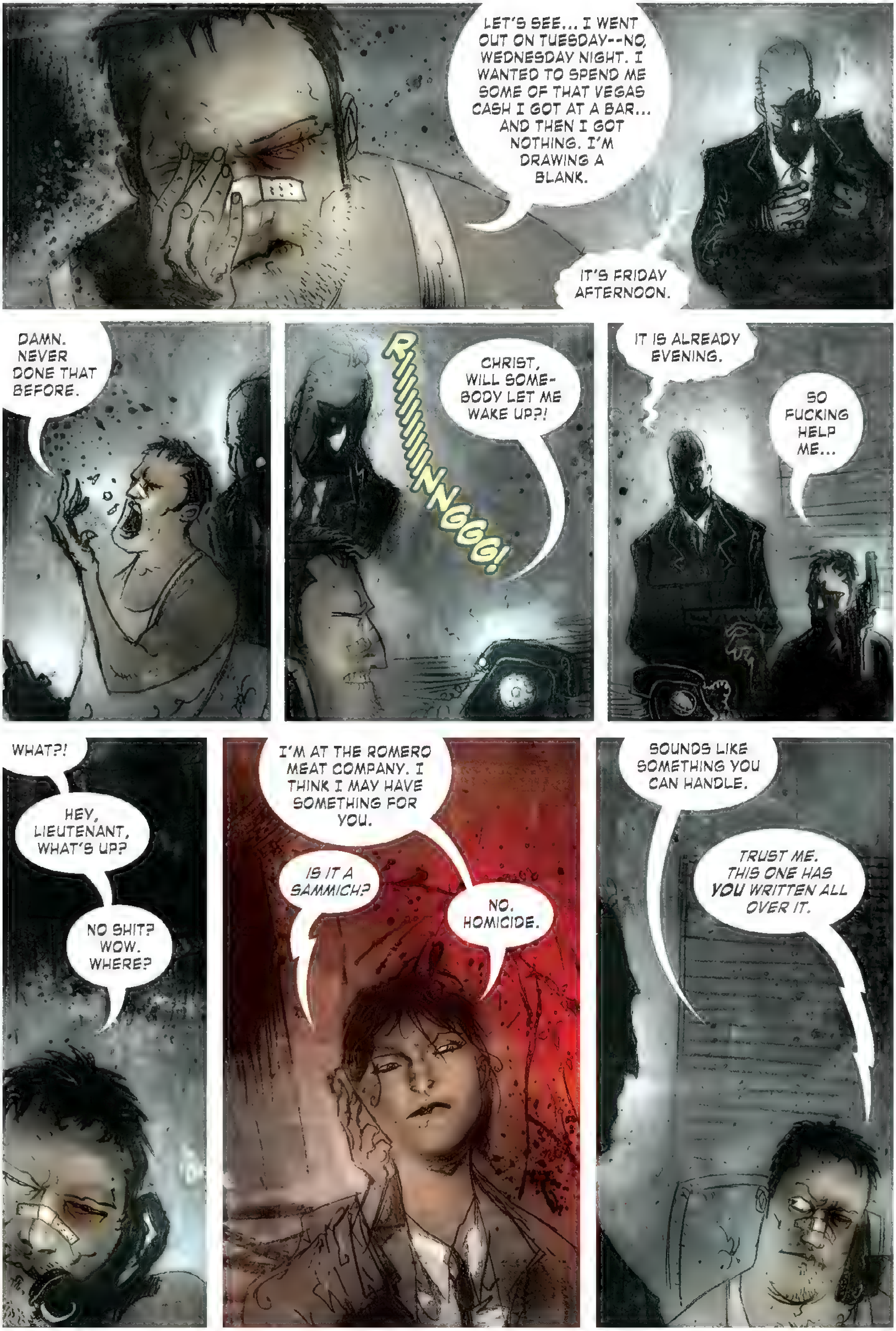
story
STEVE NILES

art
BEN TEMPLESMITH

letters
PAT BROSSEAU



HELLO, CAL.
GAAAAH!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU *DON'T DO THAT SHIT!*
I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE.
FUCKING GHOUL.
BLAM!
HEY!
THAT'S FOR SCARING ME.
LOT OF MAIL...
WHAT DAY IS IT?


LET'S SEE... I WENT OUT ON TUESDAY--NO, WEDNESDAY NIGHT. I WANTED TO SPEND ME SOME OF THAT VEGAS CASH I GOT AT A BAR... AND THEN I GOT NOTHING. I'M DRAWING A BLANK.
IT'S FRIDAY AFTERNOON.
DAMN. NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE.
RIIIIIINNGGG!
CHRIST, WILL SOME-BODY LET ME WAKE UP?!
IT IS ALREADY EVENING.
SO FUCKING HELP ME...
WHAT?!
HEY, LIEUTENANT, WHAT'S UP?
NO SHIT? WOW. WHERE?
I'M AT THE ROMERO MEAT COMPANY. I THINK I MAY HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
IS IT A SAMMICH?
NO. HOMICIDE.
SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOU CAN HANDLE.
TRUST ME. THIS ONE HAS YOU WRITTEN ALL OVER IT.

Romero Meat Co.
at Co.
NOW LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF HELL THEY'VE FOUND FOR US TODAY.
Romero
YIKES.
EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE A CASE COMES ALONG THAT YOU DON'T SOLVE SO MUCH AS IT MOWS YOU DOWN AND DRAGS YOU ALONG UNTIL IT'S OVER.
THIS WAS GOING TO BE ONE OF THOSE CASES.
IF I'D KNOWN AT THE TIME, I WOULD HAVE STAYED ON THE FUCKING TOILET.
MEAT
MEAT

THANKS FOR COMING DOWN.
THANKS FOR INVITING US. LOOKS LIKE QUITE THE SHINDIG. WHAT'S THE LOWDOWN?
DEAD MALE, LOOKS TO BE IN HIS LATE THIRTIES, EARLY FORTIES. NO OBVIOUS SIGNS OF TRAUMA...
A LOT OF BLOOD... AND, UH, MEAT.
EVERYTHING THE WAY YOU FOUND IT?
EXCEPT FOR THE CHALK OUTLINES AND YELLOW TAPE.
FUNNY. TELL YOUR CRONIES TO BACK OFF. I NEED TO SEE THE LAYOUT.
YOU HEARD THE MAN! LET'S CLEAR THE SCENE!
GOOD EVENING, LIEUTENANT BRUEGER.
YEAH... YOU TOO...
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT CONCLUSIONS THE COPS HAD COME UP WITH AND I DIDN'T CARE. I'D BET THE HOUSE THEY HAD IT WRONG.
THE SCENE LOOKED LIKE A MASSACRE, BUT IT WASN'T.
WEIRD.
THERE WAS PLENTY OF BLOOD, SURE, BUT IT WASN'T FROM THE DEAD GUY.

HMMMMM.
YOU HAVE SOMETHING?
THIS ISN'T THE VICTIM'S BLOOD. NONE OF IT IS. HE WAS BEATEN UP PRETTY BAD, AND THEN STRANGLED. THERE WOULDN'T BE MUCH BLOOD. ANY I.D. ON THE STIFF?
NOT YET. WE SHOULD HAVE IT SOON. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF ALL THE MEAT?
A STEW?
FIRST GUESS WOULD BE THAT THE PERP CHASED THE VICTIM AROUND, THEY PUSHED STUFF OVER. LOOKS LIKE THEY GOT INTO IT PRETTY GOOD AND KNOCKED BEEF ALL OVER THE PLACE.
DON'T YOU FIND THE GROUPING OF THE MEAT RATHER STRANGE?
KIND OF SHAPED LIKE THE VICTIM. WEIRD.
MAYBE THE KILLER LEFT IT AS A MESSAGE.
NOT A VERY CLEAR MESSAGE, IF IT IS.
I DON'T HAVE TO DRIVE ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE LAB TO TELL YOU THIS *ISN'T* HUMAN BLOOD-- MOST OF IT ISN'T, I'M GUESSING.
I WAS JUST SAYING THE VICTIM LOOKS LIKE HE WAS STRANGLED AND BEATEN.

THAT'S NOT MY JOB TO SAY, HONEY. MY JOB IS TO TELL YOU THAT MOST OF THIS MESS ISN'T HUMAN BLOOD, AND BASED ON WHERE WE'RE STANDING, I'D SAY IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT ALL THIS MESS IS BEEF BLOOD--COW BLOOD, WHATEVER THEY CALL IT.
YOU ALL RIGHT, HONEY? BECAUSE YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR IS LOW.
IT IS.
NOW I HAVE TO DRIVE ALL THE WAY BACK, PROVE WHAT I ALREADY KNOW, AND TYPE IT UP. HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.
coroner
ANYWAY. WE NEED A NAME FOR THIS GUY SO WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHO DID THIS TO HIM, AND IF HE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS DUMP. I NOTICED THIS PLACE LOOKS NEW, SO WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHEN IT OPENED AND WHAT IT WAS BEFORE. THEN I...
CAL?
I'M IN CHARGE HERE.
HEY, YOU INVITED ME.
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING MAKES SENSE. I'LL MAKE SURE WE GET THE INFORMATION.
NOW WHAT? DO WE START CHECKING LEADS?
FUCK NO. WE GO BACK TO THE HOUSE AND WAIT FOR BRUEGER TO STORM IN ALL ANGRY 'N' SHIT WITH THE REPORTS.

YOU BASTARD!
UNDER HALF AN HOUR, MO. YOU OWE ME A FIVER.
DAMN.
I'VE HEARD OF HUNCHES, BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS! EVERYTHING YOU SAID PANNED OUT! HALF OF HOMICIDE THINK YOU KNOW TOO MUCH AND WANT TO DRAG YOU IN FOR QUESTIONING!
WHY? THEY NEED SOME TIPS ON HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION?
WE GOT AN I.D. ON THE STIFF. HIS NAME WAS OLIVER ROMERO. HE IS ...*WAS* A BIG-TIME REAL-ESTATE TYCOON IN L.A.
SOUNDS LIKE A GUY WHO WOULD HAVE ENEMIES.
WAIT, IT GETS BETTER... OLIVER ROMERO OWNS THE LAND THAT THE ROMERO MEAT CO. IS BUILT ON. HE HAS, OR HAD, A REPUTATION FOR BEING A BULLY, FOR GETTING PROPERTIES HE WANTED AT ANY AND ALL COSTS. THIS BRINGS US TO YOUR NEXT ANNOYINGLY ACCURATE ASSUMPTION--
I WAS RIGHT AGAIN, WASN'T I?
YEEES. YOU CALLED IT. THE ROMERO MEAT COMPANY BUILDING HAS ONLY BEEN IN OPERATION FOR SIX MONTHS. THE BUILDING ITSELF IS BRAND NEW.
WHAT STRUCTURE WAS THERE BEFORE THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE?

IT WAS AN ART GALLERY--THE *GRACE GALLERY,* OWNED AND RUN BY A COUPLE, *ALICIA* AND *MICHAEL GRACE.* THEY WERE QUITE THE BIG DEAL IN THE LOS ANGELES ART SCENE.
SO WHICH ONE IS DEAD, ALICIA OR MICHAEL?
THE MAN, MICHAEL GRACE, BUT HE NEVER ACTUALLY SHOWED UP DEAD. HE JUST DISAPPEARED.
WAIT, LET ME GUESS. ALICIA IS NOW WITH THE MURDERED MEAT GUY, ROMERO?
YOU GOT IT. HOW DID YOU KNOW?
I THINK IT WAS AN EPISODE OF "*COLUMBO*". CAN'T PEOPLE COME UP WITH ORIGINAL REASONS TO OFF EACH OTHER?
ARE YOU BRINGING THE WOMAN IN FOR QUESTIONING?
THEY'RE BRINGING HER TO THE STATION RIGHT NOW.
MIND IF I TALK TO HER?
YOU PROMISE TO BEHAVE?
NO. BUT I NEED TO TALK TO HER.
YOU THINK CHARLES AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM WILL LET US BORROW SOME EQUIPMENT, OR DO YOU THINK HE'S STILL PISSED THAT I DESTROYED A COUPLE EXHIBITS?
CHARLES IS A FINE GHOUL, AND AS A GHOUL, HE DOES NOT HOLD GRUDGES.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
WOW, I NEVER HEARD A GHOUL CURSE LIKE THAT BEFORE!
MOST UNCOMMON, BUT AT LEAST HE LET YOU BORROW THE SCANNER.
HE DIDN'T HAVE TO CALL ME A *DICK LICK.*
ro Meat Co.
HEY, MCDONALD, SEE ANY MONSTERS TONIGHT?
EVER SEE A COP WITH AN X-RAY MACHINE UP HIS ASS?
HEH, HEH.
ONE OF US MOVES THE SCANNER AROUND WHILE ONE WATCHES THE MONITOR. YER GHOUL PAL SAID THIS THING CAN SEE UP TO TWELVE FEET THROUGH CONCRETE.
I'LL SCAN.
ANYTHING?
YEAH, A LOT OF STATIC.
SLAP!
WAIT! BACK IT UP. I THINK WE GOT SOMETHING.

BINGO!
WE HAVE A BODY. BY THE LOOK OF IT, BURIED UNDER A FEW FEET OF CONCRETE.
MICHAEL GRACE... THE MISSING GALLERY OWNER AND HUSBAND OF MRS. ALICIA GRACE.
FOLLOW THIS--MR. AND MRS. GRACE HAVE A LOVELY GALLERY, THEY MAKE A LOT OF MONEY. MRS. GRACE DECIDES SHE'S SICK OF HER HUSBAND AND GETS CUDDLY WITH OLIVER ROMERO, THE MEAT KING. TOGETHER THEY OFF THE HUSBAND, SHE SELLS THE BUILDING TO ROMERO, AND THEY USE IT AS GRACE'S TOMB.
BUT WHO WOULD KILL ROMERO, THE MEAT KING? THE WOMAN WOULD HAVE TO REALIZE SHE'D BE SUSPECTED.
I THOUGHT WE WERE ALONE. WHAT THE FUCK'S THAT NOISE?

HOLY CRAP!
SLAP!
UH!

OKAY, I THINK I MIGHT KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON--
--HEEEEEREEEEEE! *OOF!*
BAM
CRACK
THIS CREATURE...IS MADE...ENTIRELY OF MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS. MY BLOWS DO NOTHING.
THINK OF IT AS TENDERIZING!
HOW'S THAT FEEL?
THOOSHNK!
UH!

I'M PRETTY SURE WE'RE DEALING WITH A ROGUE SPIRIT, BUT FIRST WE HAVE TO--
BOOM
OH!

HOW'S THE INVESTIGATION GOING?
I CAN EXPLAIN.
I JUST CAME TO TELL YOU WE HAVE THE WIFE, ALICIA GRACE, BACK AT THE STATION.
WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU TWO DOING?
YEAH, WELL, I THINK WE HAVE THIS WHOLE THING FIGURED OUT.
THERE'S ANOTHER BODY UNDER THE FLOOR AND I'LL BET MY BALLS THAT IT'S ALICIA'S LONG-LOST HUSBAND, ***MICHAEL GRACE.***
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GRILLING HER ABOUT. HOW DOES A WOMAN ***LOSE*** ONE HUSBAND AND JUST HAPPEN TO DATE THE GUY WHO WANTED THE PROPERTY--A GUY... A GUY WHO HAS A LESS-THAN-FLATTERING RAP SHEET, I MIGHT ADD.
THAT'S WHAT CAL SAID...EXCEPT ABOUT ROMERO BEING A CRIMINAL.
NONE OF THIS TELLS US WHO KILLED ROMERO HERE LAST NIGHT.
I HAVE A THEORY ON THAT.
HOW ABOUT SHARING?
I'LL SPARE YOU UNTIL I FIGURE IT ALL OUT. LET'S GO TALK TO ALICIA GRACE.
ALICCCIAAAAAAAAA.

WE KNOW YOU AND YOUR MEAT-KING BOYFRIEND KILLED YOUR HUSBAND.
NO! HE RAN OUT ON ME! OLIVER TOOK CARE OF ME WHEN I WAS ALONE!
SURE HE DID.
MIND IF I TAKE A SHOT, MILLER?
HA HA HA
OKAY, BUT WE'RE PRETTY SURE DRACULA DIDN'T DO IT.
I JUST READ A LOOOONG RAP SHEET ON OLIVER ROMERO. WERE YOU AWARE HE DID TIME FOR EXTORTION AND ASSAULT?
OLIVER? NO, HE WAS SO KIND. HE TOOK CARE OF ME AFTER MICHAEL DISAPPEARED.
I *BET!*
CAN IT, MILLER!
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THERE WAS A BODY BURIED BENEATH THE ROMERO MEAT COMPANY?
BODY?
DO THE MATH...YOUR HUSBAND DISAPPEARS, ALONG COMES ROMERO TO TAKE CARE OF YOU, BUYS YOUR GALLERY, PUTS UP HIS MEAT HOUSE, AND THERE'S A BODY BURIED LESS THAN SIX FEET DOWN.
WHAT'S MATH GOT TO DO--
SHUT UP.
RIGHT NOW THE COPS, GENIUSES THAT THEY ARE, HAVE YOU AS THEIR PRIMARY SUSPECT ON BOTH MURDERS.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS CONVENIENT THAT OLIVER APPEARED WHEN HE DID... AND HE SEEMED PRETTY SURE MICHAEL WAS GONE WHEN I STILL HAD HOPE.
...I THINK THAT SON OF A BITCH KILLED MY HUSBAND AND NOW HE'S DEAD, *SO I CAN'T KILL HIM MYSELF!*
HEY, WHAT THE HELL?!
MILLER, KEEP IT *DOWN* IN THERE!

CRAAAASSSHH!
AHHHHHHHHHH!
I WAS AFRAID THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
EVERYBODY STAY BACK! I WANT NO SHOOTING!
MO'LOCK! HELP THE WOMAN. I HAVE A PLAN!
DEAR GOD.
MICHAEL! STOP IT!

LISTEN TO ME, MICHAEL. I KNOW IT'S YOU IN THERE. I KNOW IT'S YOU POSSESSING THE MEAT!
IS THAT... MEAT?
WHAT'S MCDONALD DOING WITH IT?
TALKING TO IT.
THAT'S DISGUSTING.
AH! TAKE IT EASY!

MICHAEL!
WHAT?
ALICIA DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOUR DEATH, DUDE. IT WAS JUST THAT SCUMBAG ROMERO.
REALLY?
HE PLAYED HER FOR A FOOL, TOO.
THEN I'M GLAD I KILLED HIM.
ME TOO.
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO BE HERE ANYMORE. YOUR MURDER STOPPED YOU FROM PASSING ON, BUT YOU GOT YOUR REVENGE. YOU CAN LEAVE NOW.
NO SMOKING, MCDONALD!
BITE ME!

THAT'S NOT WHY I COULDN'T GO. I COULDN'T PASS ON BECAUSE OF ALICIA. WE CAN'T BE APART, AND WHEN I FOUND OUT SHE WAS WITH THAT MAN, I ASSUMED THE WORST. I SUCK.
SHE MEANT SO MUCH TO YOU THAT YOU COULDN'T DIE. WOW, IF I WAS A BIG PUSSY, THAT WOULD BE REALLY TOUCHING.
TELL YOU WHAT...
MO'LOCK, ANY CLUE WHAT YOUR CRAZY BUDDY'S UP TO?
AT THIS JUNCTURE, LIEUTENANT BRUEGER, I AM AS CONFUSED AS YOU.

GOOD LORD, CAL, WHAT'S HAPPENED?!
CAL? YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'RE ABOUT TO EXPLODE.
EBLEE FING IZ FINE.
MIZZ GLAZE... EBLEE FING IS UNDER CONBROL. YEEEER... HOOZBIN IZZZ...FIBE.
WHAT?
I BELIEVE HE SAID *EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL.*
LOOOOOGER.
HE'S SAYING YOUR NAME, LIEUTENANT.
I KNOW WHAT HE SAID. CAL, GO ON. WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT CAN I DO?

DO YOO AV ANY ON DOOS INA DA ORGE?
WHAT? I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU.
I THINK HE'S ASKING A QUESTION.
SOMETHING TO WRITE ON! HE WANTS SOMETHING TO WRITE ON!
MAYBE IN MY OFFICE...
I HAVE A PAD AND PEN SOMEWHERE IN HERE.
DO YOU HAVE ANY JOHN DOE'S IN THE MORGE???
I'M SURE WE HAVE A COUPLE UNCLAIMED CORPSES... WHY?

OVER THERE, THE OLD MAN. I THINK HE'S UNCLAIMED.
FANK FUKLING GAWD!
OH MY GOD! IS HE THROWING UP ON THAT OLD DEAD MAN?!
GWWAAAAAAAW!
MO'LOCK, LIEUTENANT, MRS. GRACE...I'D LIKE YOU ALL TO MEET THE TORMENTED SOUL OF MICHAEL GRACE.
ALICIA?
M...MICHAEL?

HOW COULD YOU THINK I'D HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOUR DEATH?
I DON'T KNOW-- MAYBE I WAS CRAZY JEALOUS.
THAT'S THE GUY BURIED UNDER THE MEAT HOUSE?
YEP.
AND HE POSSESSED THE MEAT TO KILL ROMERO?
THAT WILL BE AN AMUSING REPORT TO WRITE, NO?
FIRST OFF, MICHAEL, PUT ON SOME CLOTHES BEFORE I THROW UP. SECOND, I HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG THIS WILL LAST, SO YOU TWO BETTER GET OUT OF HERE.
MORG
I'M GOING HOME AND GETTING DRUNK.
SEE? THAT'S HOW IT STARTS!

WHATTA YOU WANNA DO?
I HEARD THERE WERE SOME SUSPICIOUS TRACKS FOUND IN GRIFFITH PARK.
WEREWOLVES, BIG FEETS, MAYBE A CHUPACABRA?
PERHAPS. SHALL WE INVESTIGATE?
WHY NOT? I POPPED SOME UPPERS. I'M GOING TO BE AWAKE FOR DAYS.
End

LAST TRAIN TO DEADSVILLE

KELLEY JONES 05

story
STEVE NILES

art
KELLEY JONES

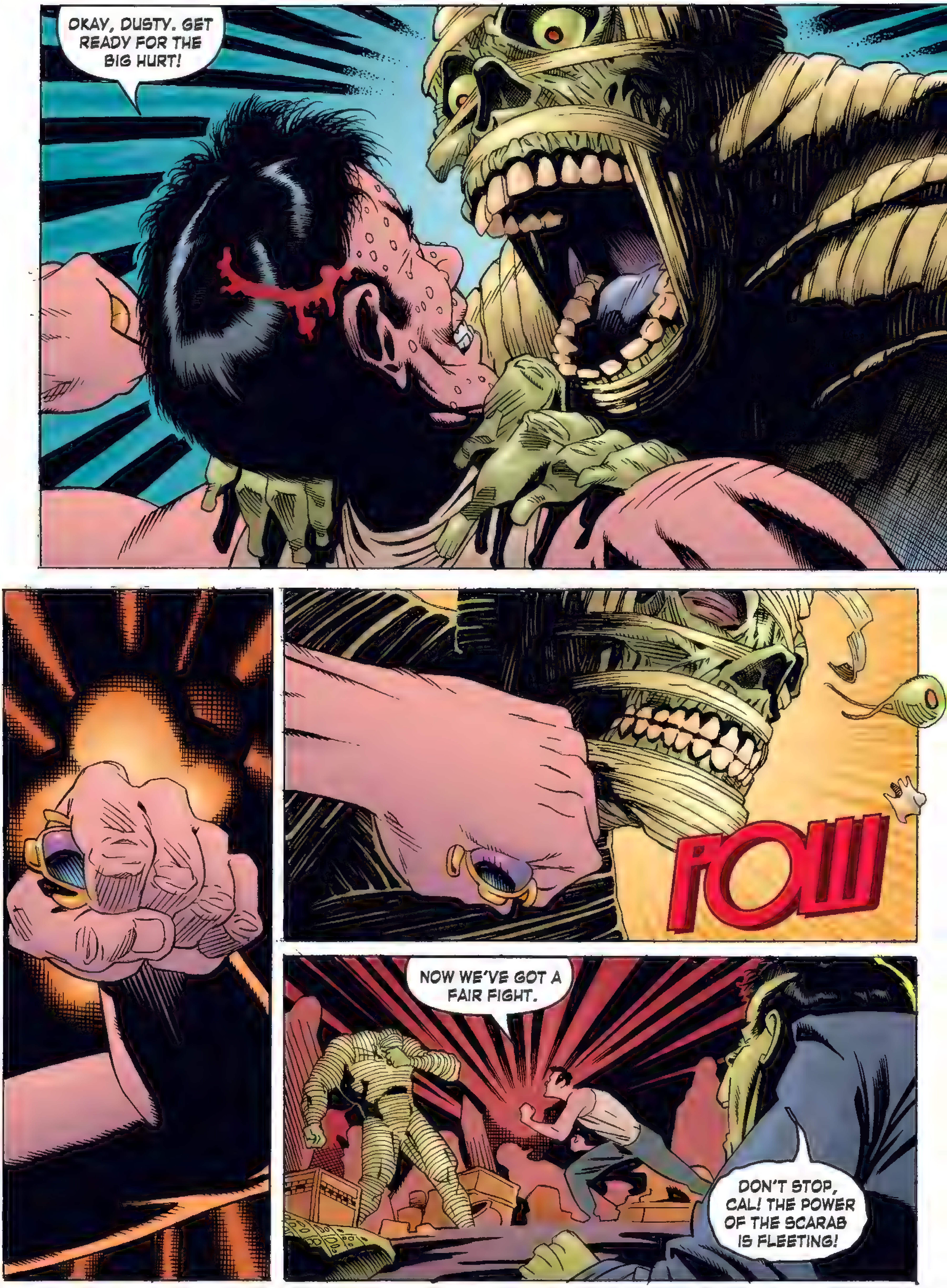
colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

MY RIBS WERE SPLIT AND SHATTERED LIKE TWIGS. MY LARYNX WAS BEING CRUSHED AND FOR THE FUCKING LIFE OF ME I COULDN'T REMEMBER LOCKING THE FRONT DOOR OF MY HOUSE.
I WAS IN SHOCK. THE GRIP ON MY THROAT WAS SO TIGHT NOT ONE DROP OF BLOOD FLOWED IN OR OUT OF MY BRAIN.
MY LIFE BEGAN FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES... TORMENTED BY CREATURES OF THE NIGHT SINCE BIRTH... SPIRALING INTO A DRUGGED HAZE FOR DECADES... LOSING MY FAMILY... MOM, DAD, MY LITTLE SIS...AND YEARS BEFORE... MY OLDER BROTHER... TAKEN RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES...KICKED OFF THE FORCE...

THE LAST THING I NEEDED WAS THAT DEPRESSING-ASS BRAIN SLIDE SHOW.
IT WAS TIME TO WRAP UP THIS LITTLE MEXICAN WRESTLING MATCH.
MO'LOCK! GACK... FIND THAT... GARG... ...BEETLE THINGY!
ARE YOU REFERRING TO THE SCARAB OF RA?
WHATEVER!

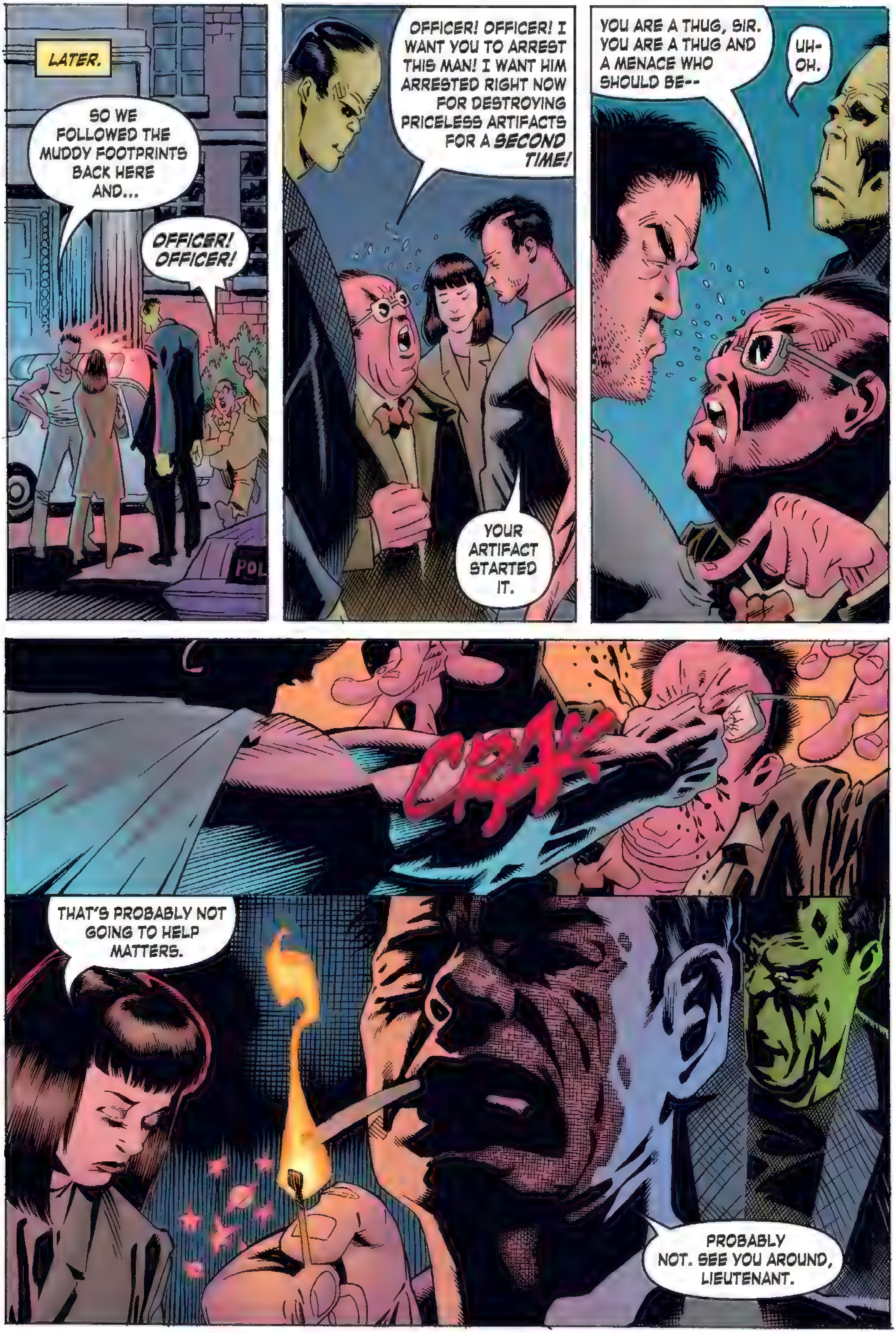
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN HAVING A DEAD MAN AS A PARTNER HAS ITS UPSIDES.
CAN'T... REACH... IT...
CRACK! SNAP! POP!
THE CRAZY GHOUL HAD ABANDONED TRYING TO FREE HIMSELF. INSTEAD HE ALLOWED HIS BONES TO BE SHATTERED SO HE COULD STRETCH HIS SKIN AND REACH WHAT I NEEDED.
hwaugh...
CRAAAACK SNAP!
I HAVE IT!
IT WAS THE COOLEST THING HE'D EVER DONE FOR ME.
BUT REALLY FUCKING GROSS.
GOT IT!

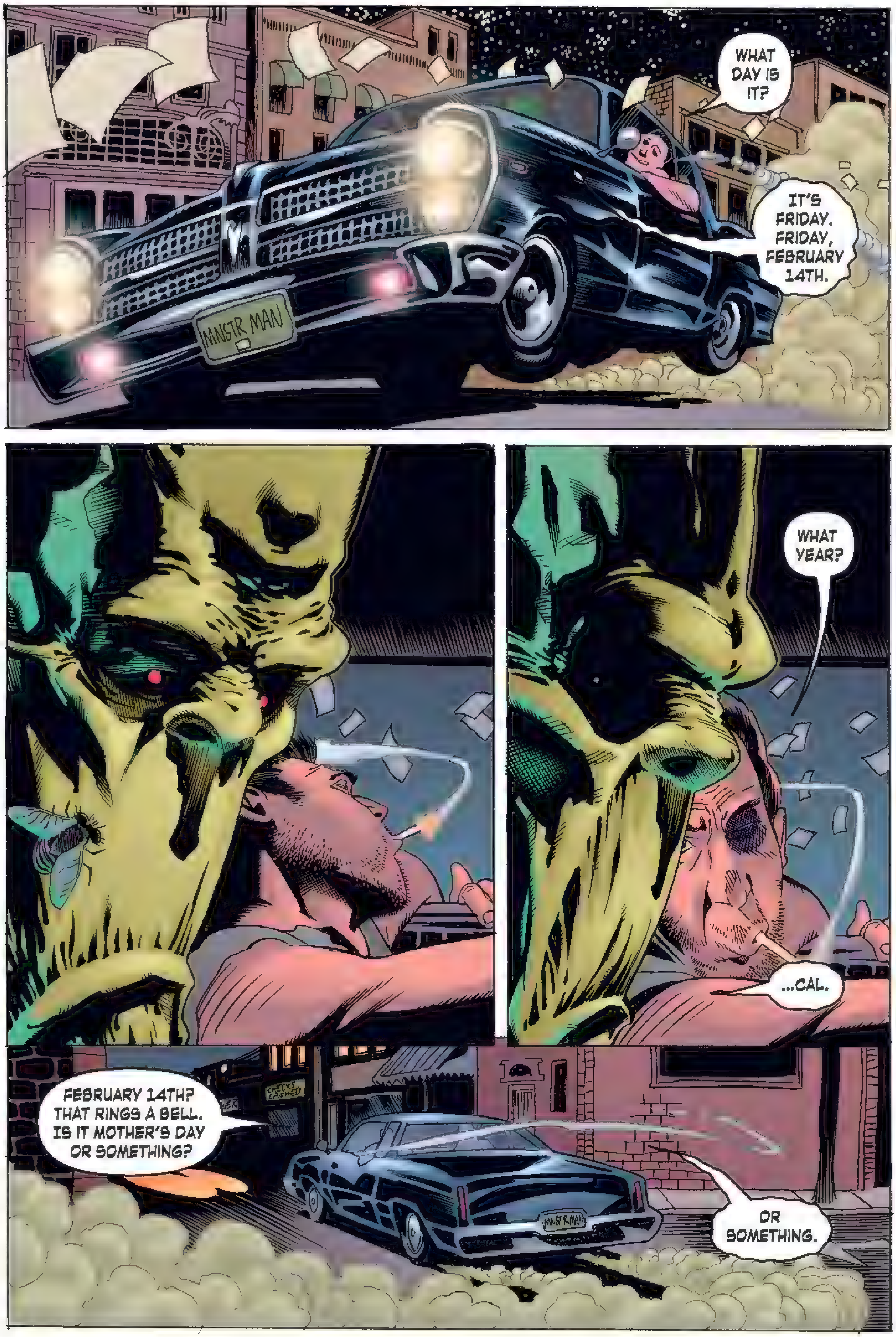

OKAY, DUSTY. GET READY FOR THE BIG HURT!
POW
NOW WE'VE GOT A FAIR FIGHT.
DON'T STOP, CAL! THE POWER OF THE SCARAB IS FLEETING!

LIKE THAT?!
HOW ABOUT THAT?!
SUCK!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

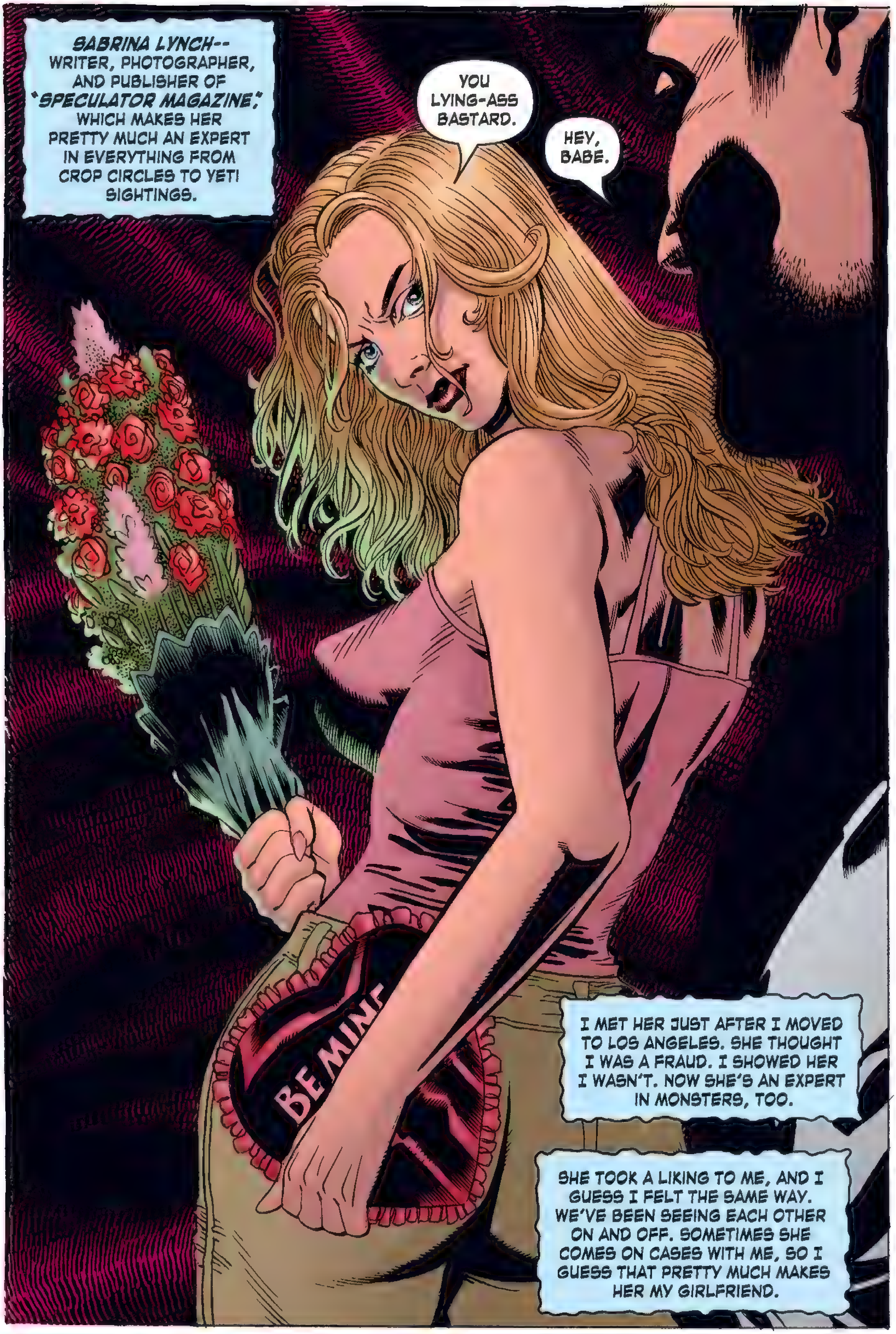
SMASH
COME BACK TO LIFE AND TORMENT THE LIVING, WILL YOU? THINK AGAIN!
PLACE THE SCARAB INSIDE THE CARCASS!
BOOOF
THAT ROCKED.

MO'LOCK? CAL?
WE CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.


LATER.
SO WE FOLLOWED THE MUDDY FOOTPRINTS BACK HERE AND...
OFFICER! OFFICER!
POL
OFFICER! OFFICER! I WANT YOU TO ARREST THIS MAN! I WANT HIM ARRESTED RIGHT NOW FOR DESTROYING PRICELESS ARTIFACTS FOR A *SECOND TIME!*
YOUR ARTIFACT STARTED IT.
YOU ARE A THUG, SIR. YOU ARE A THUG AND A MENACE WHO SHOULD BE--
UH-OH.
CRAK
THAT'S PROBABLY NOT GOING TO HELP MATTERS.
PROBABLY NOT. SEE YOU AROUND, LIEUTENANT.


WHAT DAY IS IT?
IT'S FRIDAY. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH.
MNSTR MAN
WHAT YEAR?
...CAL.
CHECKS CASHED
FEBRUARY 14TH? THAT RINGS A BELL. IS IT MOTHER'S DAY OR SOMETHING?
MNSTR MAN
OR SOMETHING.

SHIT, THE SUN'S ALREADY UP. I GOTTA GET SOME SLEEP.
DO YOU MIND IF I WATCH A D.V.D. WHILE YOU REST?
KNOCK YOURSELF OUT, DEAD BOY. I PLAN ON BEING HEAVILY SEDATED.
FEBRUARY 14TH, FEBRUARY 14TH. WHY DOES THAT DATE STICK IN MY BRAIN?
BAM BAM
BING-BONG
BING-BONG
BAM BAM
I BELIEVE YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
SHUT UP.


SABRINA LYNCH--
WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND PUBLISHER OF "SPECULATOR MAGAZINE," WHICH MAKES HER PRETTY MUCH AN EXPERT IN EVERYTHING FROM CROP CIRCLES TO YETI SIGHTINGS.
YOU LYING-ASS BASTARD.
HEY, BABE.
BE MINE
I MET HER JUST AFTER I MOVED TO LOS ANGELES. SHE THOUGHT I WAS A FRAUD. I SHOWED HER I WASN'T. NOW SHE'S AN EXPERT IN MONSTERS, TOO.
SHE TOOK A LIKING TO ME, AND I GUESS I FELT THE SAME WAY. WE'VE BEEN SEEING EACH OTHER ON AND OFF. SOMETIMES SHE COMES ON CASES WITH ME, SO I GUESS THAT PRETTY MUCH MAKES HER MY GIRLFRIEND.

I DON'T HAVE VERY GOOD LUCK WITH GIRLFRIENDS.
OR ANY LIVING HUMANS, FOR THAT MATTER.
BUT NOT FOR THE REASONS YOU'D THINK.
KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS? WE TALKED ABOUT IT ...AT LENGTH.
I KNOW THIS ONE. IT'S FRIDAY. FRIDAY THE...UH...13TH OR SOMETHING.
ANYBODY WHO GETS CLOSE TO ME ALWAYS WINDS UP DEAD.
IT'S VALENTINE'S DAY. SEE? I EVEN BROUGHT FLOWERS AND CHOCOLATE TO SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE.
SHIT. THAT'S ONE I'M SUPPOSED TO REMEMBER, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S WHY I HANG WITH THE GHOUL. HE WON'T GO DYING ON ME.
HOW MUCH HAVE YOU HAD TO DRINK?
CLEARLY NOT ENOUGH.
MY NAME IS CAL MCDONALD. I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE. I EXCLUSIVELY HANDLE SHIT OTHER PEOPLE WON'T. I HUNT MONSTERS.
THIS GIRLFRIEND SHIT IS WORSE THAN ANY FREAK I'VE EVER DEALT WITH.
I'M JUST NOT EQUIPPED.

I DON'T NEED THIS SHIT.
HEH, HEH.
YUK IT UP, DEAD BOY. AT LEAST I'M GETTING LAID.
EVER THE ROMANTIC.
I SHOULD GO AFTER HER, SHOULDN'T I?
I WOULD.

YOU THE FELLER WHO HELPS PEOPLES WHAT GOT CURSED?
THE DIVIL'S GOT INTO OUR BOY!

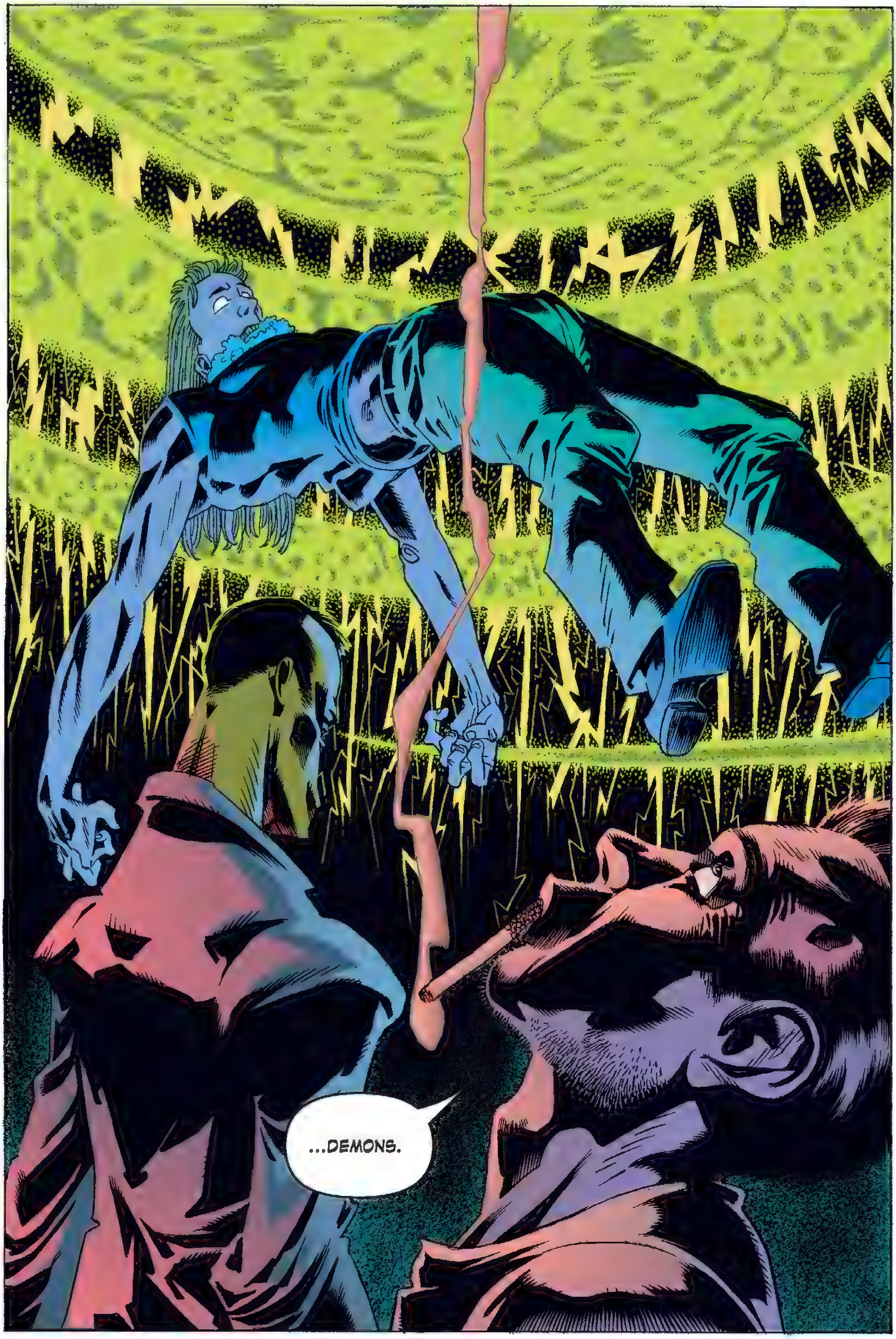
WHAT IS IT, CAL?
THE CLAMPETTS, I THINK.
THAZ RIGHT. MAKE FUN OF THA LESS FOR-TUNE-ATE, GO AHEAD. WE'S COMES FER HELP AN' THIS IS WHAT CHOO DO?
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY PARTNER...
PARTNER?!
... PLEASE ...COME IN.
TRAVELED ALL THE WAY FROM THE OZARKS FOR HELP, DID YOU?
NO, WE'S FROM ORANGE COUNTY.
PLEASE, PUT THE CHILD ON THE COUCH.
GENTLY... THERE WE GO.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?
IT'S EITHER POSSESSION... OR RABIES.
CAL, BE SERIOUS!
I'M TRYING!
MO, LIFT HIS SHIRT UP A SECOND.

THAT AIN'T MY FAMILY
LOOK OUT!
DEMONS!
WHUD

ACTION PLAN?
THEY SHOWED THEIR TRUE FORM. THEY'RE ON OUR TURF NOW. JUST KICK THEIR ASS.
RIGHT.
OKAY, FUCKS, ANY LAST WORDS?
HEEEEEEEELP USSSSSSSSS!

CONSIDER YOURSELVES HELPED.
BLAMM!
KRAKK
OOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHHHHH
ALWAYS REMEMBER, A DEMON CAN'T DO SHIT IN THIS WORLD IF YOU DON'T LET IT, KID. THINK OF THEM AS LITTLE UGLY INSECURITIES THAT CAN BE DECAPITATED.
CAL...
LEMME TALK. I'LL TEACH THE KID SOMETHING ABOUT...


...DEMONS.

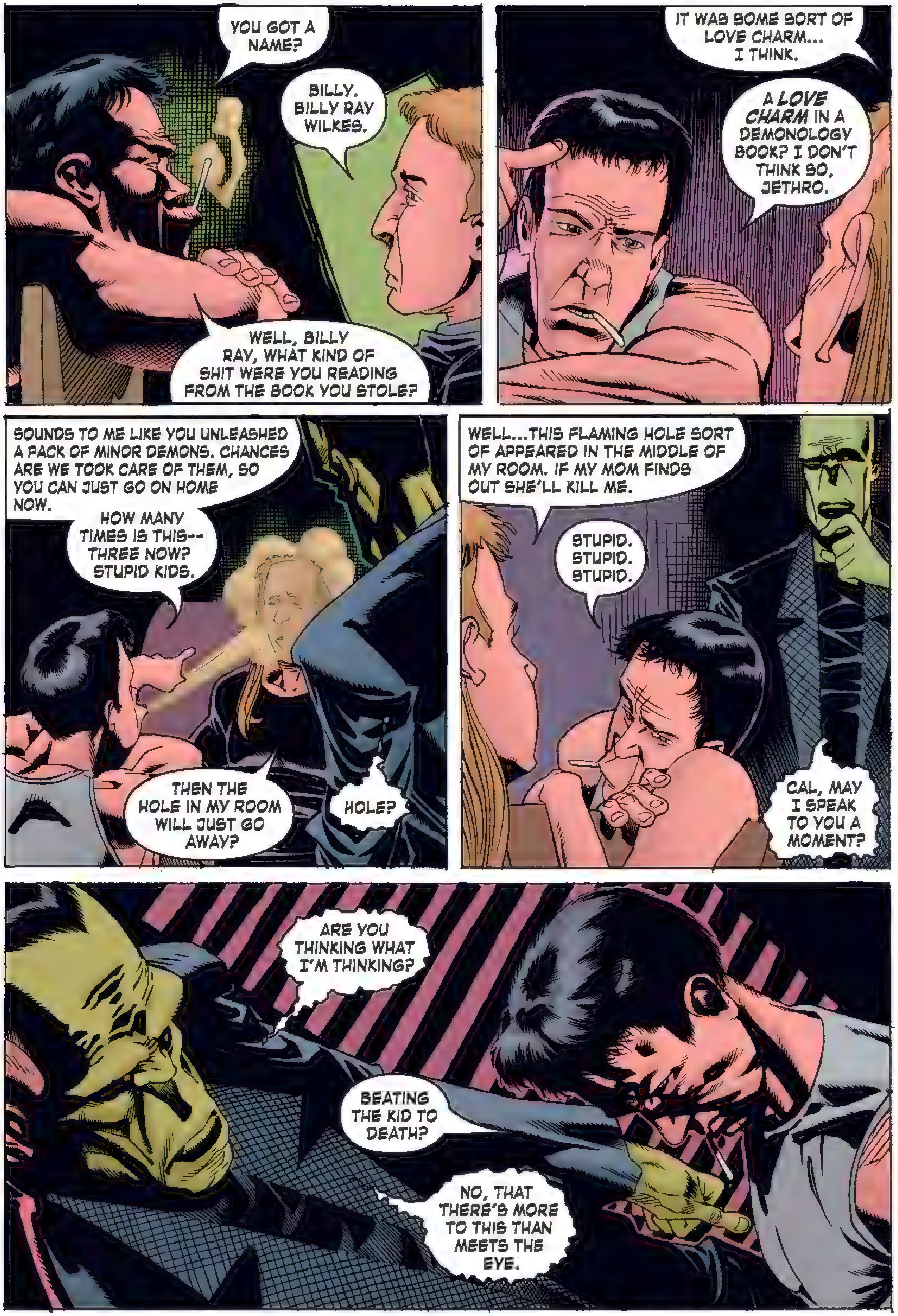
BANG!
KRASH!
THE BOY'S SOUL IS MINE!
BLAH! BLAH! BLAH! SPARE ME THE--
KRAK!
SON OF--

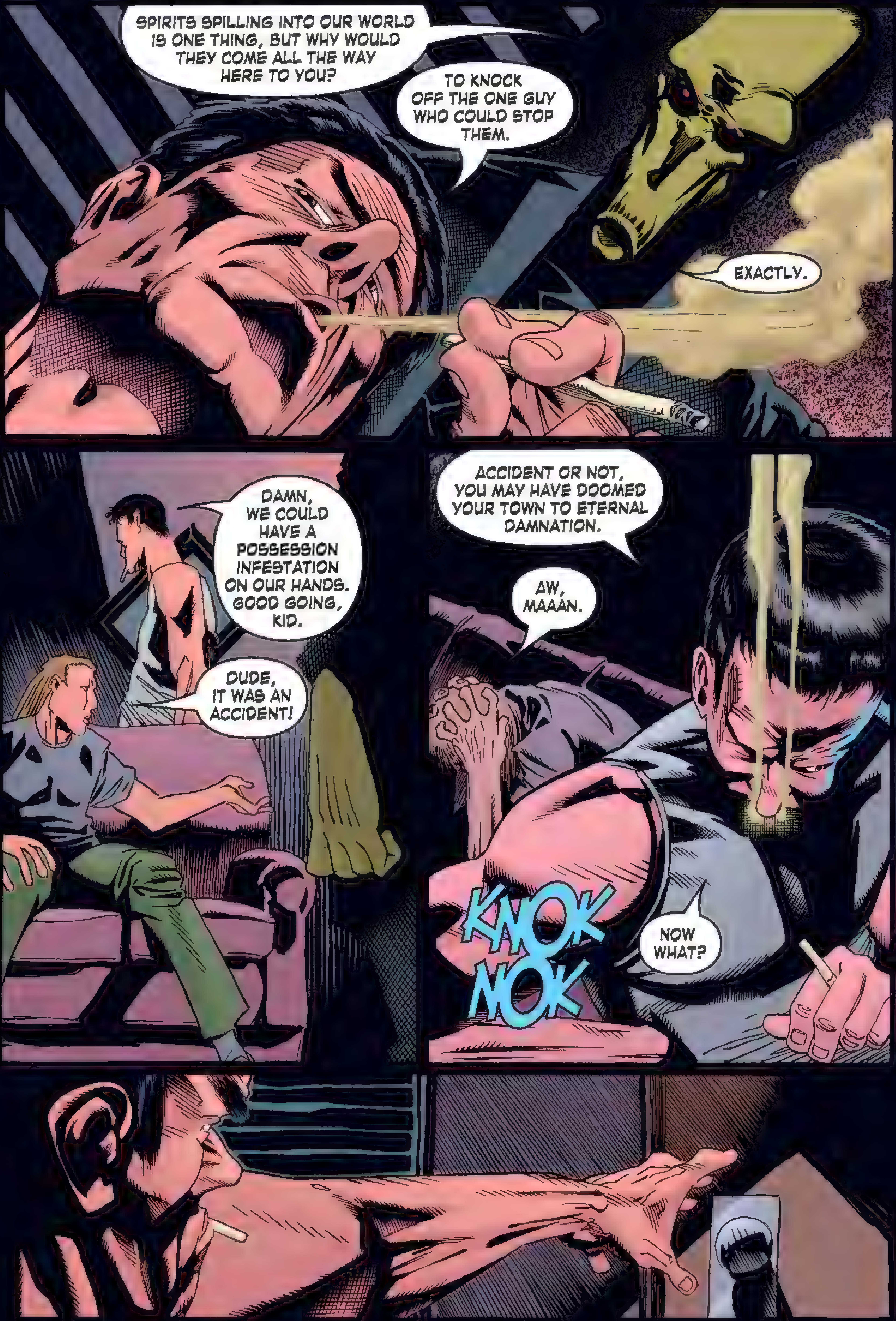
WE MUST EXORCISE THE DEMON. THE CHILD MIGHT BE KILLED IF HIS BODY IS TOO BADLY DAMAGED.
COME ON... HE'S, LIKE, SEVENTEEN, AND *I'M* THE ONE TAKING ALL THE DAMAGE HERE.
AAAGHHHH!

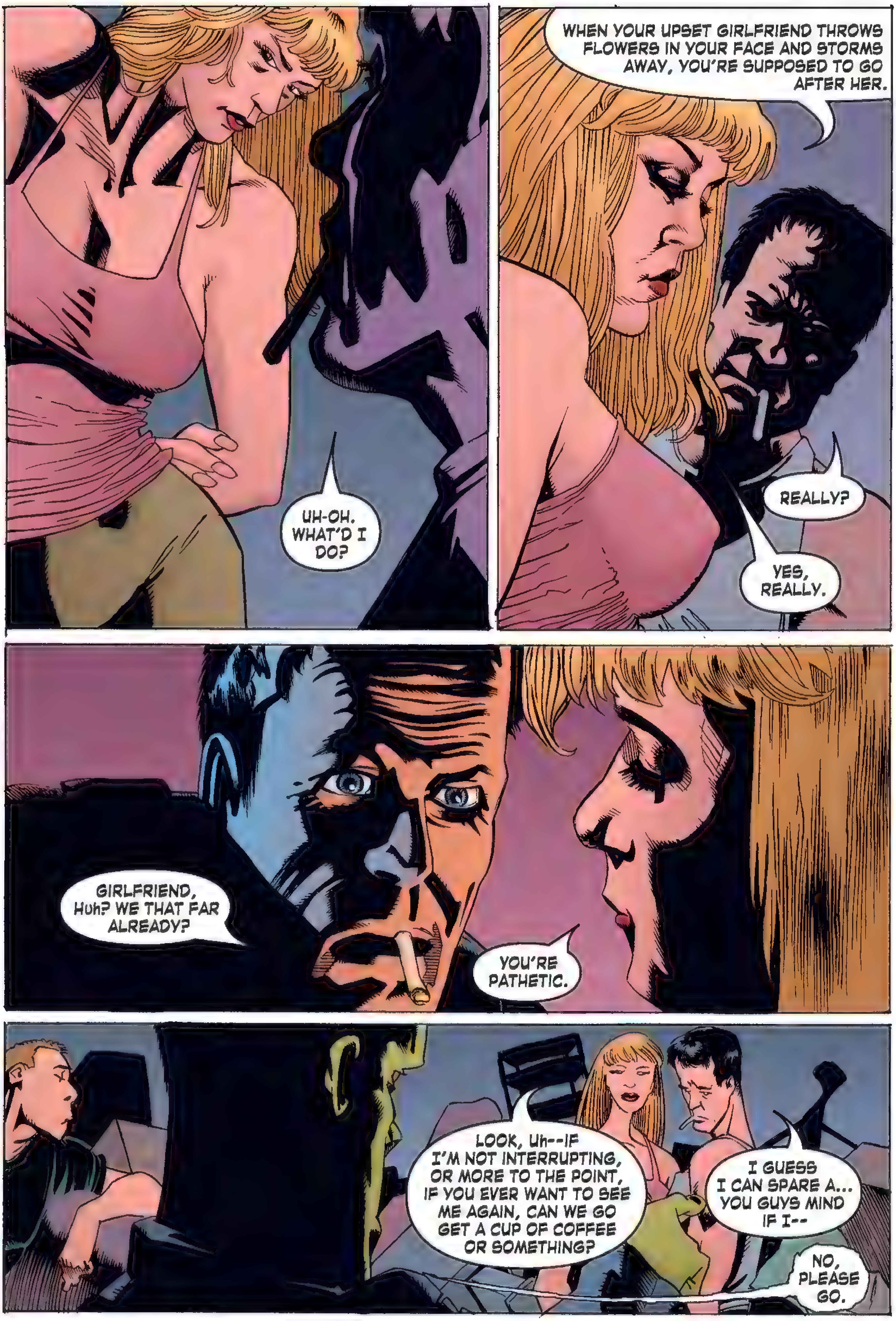
WHERE'S THE HOLY WAFERS?
IF I RECALL, YOU ATE THEM.
AH HA!
I'LL HAVE YOUR SOUL NEXT!
DEMON!
?

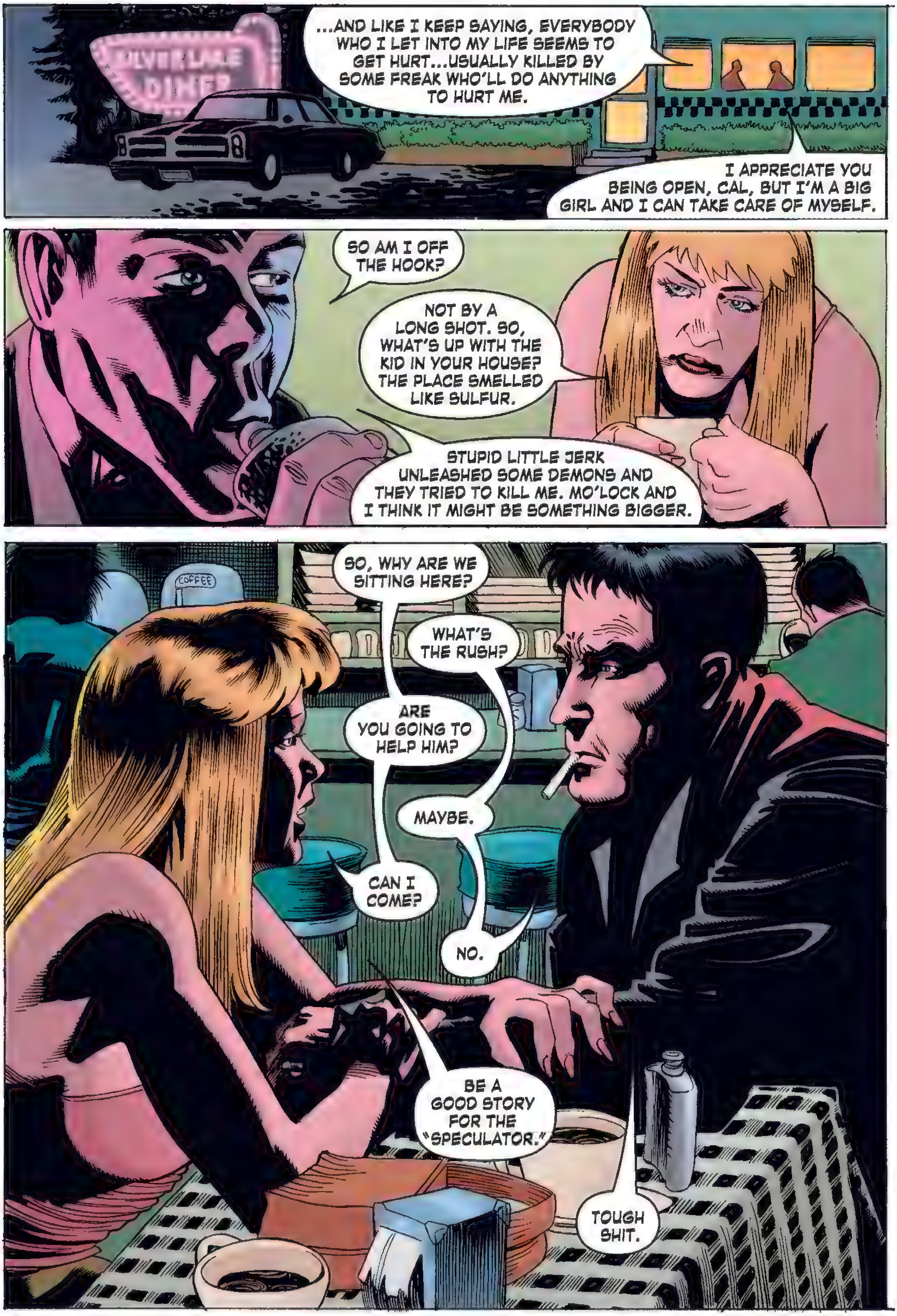
WHY DON'T YOU POSSESS ME?
RRRROOOOOOAAAR!
YOU GOT 'IM?
YEPH.
WHAT KIND OF STUPID DEMON TRIES TO POSSESS A GHOUL?
A RASH AND MINOR DEMON WHO WILL SOON SUFFER SUFFOCATION IN ETERNAL LIMBO WITHIN MY SOULLESS BEING.
OKAY, LOOKS LIKE IT'S HAD IT. LET IT OUT.
BURP

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
THAT'S WHAT WE'D LIKE TO KNOW.
LAST THING I REMEMBER... I WAS READING A BOOK I SWIPED FROM THE LIBRARY AND THEN *BANG*, I'M TRAPPED INSIDE THIS BLACK VOID.
WHAT KIND OF BOOK?
UM...A BOOK OF WITCHCRAFT AND DEMONOLOGY.
LET ME GUESS--YOU WERE READING IT OUT LOUD?
YEAH.
DUMBASS.
WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT THE CHILD RELEASED SOME SORT OF EVIL FORCE. WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW IS WHAT SORT OF INCANTATION IT WAS.
YOU WANNA DO THIS? I CAN GO TO FUCKING BED IF YOU'D RATHER RUN THE SHOW HERE!
I APOLOGIZE.


YOU GOT A NAME?
BILLY. BILLY RAY WILKES.
WELL, BILLY RAY, WHAT KIND OF SHIT WERE YOU READING FROM THE BOOK YOU STOLE?
IT WAS SOME SORT OF LOVE CHARM... I THINK.
A *LOVE CHARM* IN A DEMONOLOGY BOOK? I DON'T THINK SO, JETHRO.
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU UNLEASHED A PACK OF MINOR DEMONS. CHANCES ARE WE TOOK CARE OF THEM, SO YOU CAN JUST GO ON HOME NOW.
HOW MANY TIMES IS THIS-- THREE NOW? STUPID KIDS.
THEN THE HOLE IN MY ROOM WILL JUST GO AWAY?
HOLE?
WELL...THIS FLAMING HOLE SORT OF APPEARED IN THE MIDDLE OF MY ROOM. IF MY MOM FINDS OUT SHE'LL KILL ME.
STUPID. STUPID. STUPID.
CAL, MAY I SPEAK TO YOU A MOMENT?
ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?
BEATING THE KID TO DEATH?
NO, THAT THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE.


SPIRITS SPILLING INTO OUR WORLD IS ONE THING, BUT WHY WOULD THEY COME ALL THE WAY HERE TO YOU?
TO KNOCK OFF THE ONE GUY WHO COULD STOP THEM.
EXACTLY.
DAMN, WE COULD HAVE A POSSESSION INFESTATION ON OUR HANDS. GOOD GOING, KID.
DUDE, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
ACCIDENT OR NOT, YOU MAY HAVE DOOMED YOUR TOWN TO ETERNAL DAMNATION.
AW, MAAAN.
KNOK NOK
NOW WHAT?

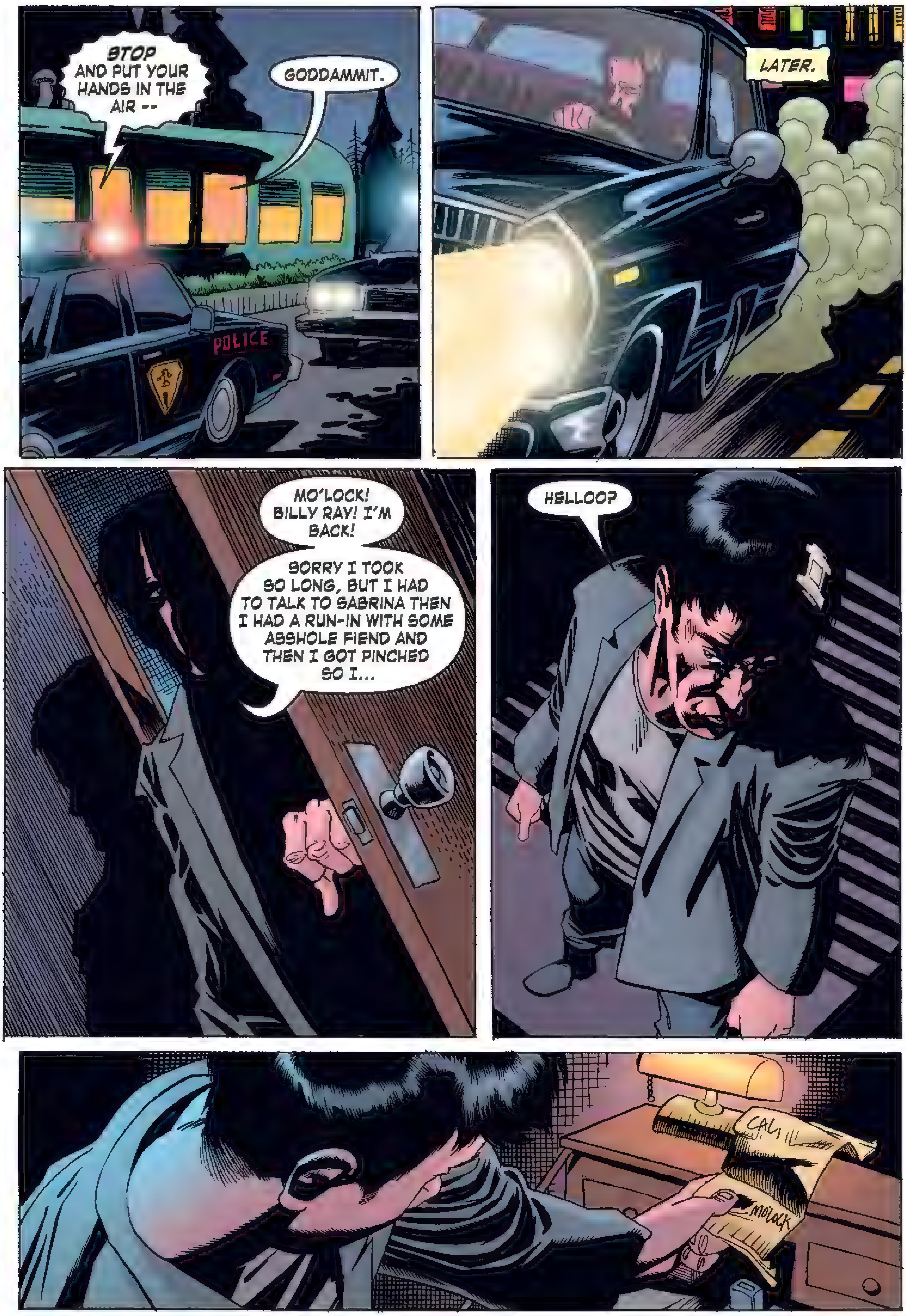

UH-OH. WHAT'D I DO?
WHEN YOUR UPSET GIRLFRIEND THROWS FLOWERS IN YOUR FACE AND STORMS AWAY, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO GO AFTER HER.
REALLY?
YES, REALLY.
GIRLFRIEND, Huh? WE THAT FAR ALREADY?
YOU'RE PATHETIC.
LOOK, Uh--IF I'M NOT INTERRUPTING, OR MORE TO THE POINT, IF YOU EVER WANT TO SEE ME AGAIN, CAN WE GO GET A CUP OF COFFEE OR SOMETHING?
I GUESS I CAN SPARE A... YOU GUYS MIND IF I--
NO, PLEASE GO.

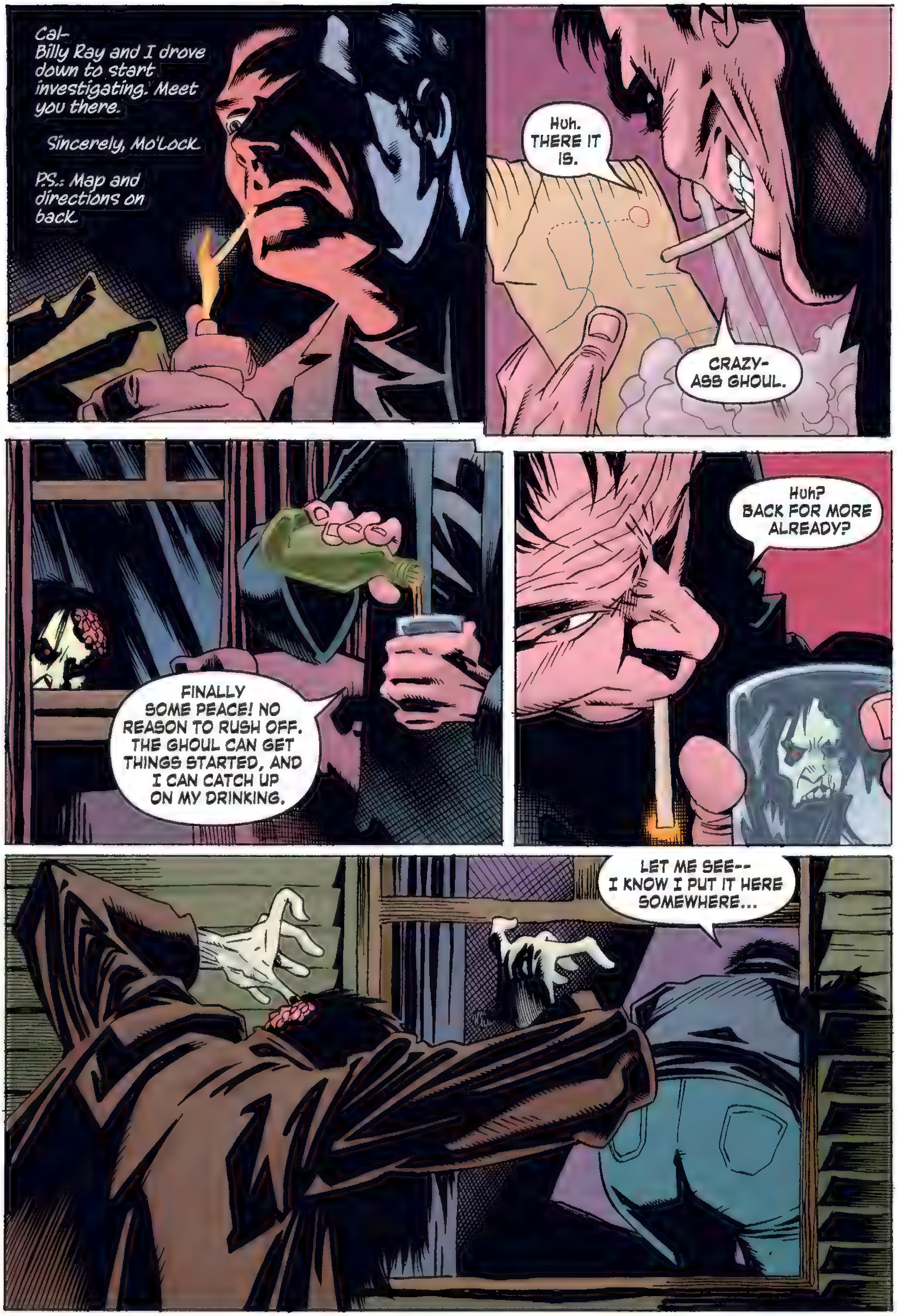

ILVERLAKE DINER
...AND LIKE I KEEP SAYING, EVERYBODY WHO I LET INTO MY LIFE SEEMS TO GET HURT...USUALLY KILLED BY SOME FREAK WHO'LL DO ANYTHING TO HURT ME.
I APPRECIATE YOU BEING OPEN, CAL, BUT I'M A BIG GIRL AND I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
SO AM I OFF THE HOOK?
NOT BY A LONG SHOT. SO, WHAT'S UP WITH THE KID IN YOUR HOUSE? THE PLACE SMELLED LIKE SULFUR.
STUPID LITTLE JERK UNLEASHED SOME DEMONS AND THEY TRIED TO KILL ME. MO'LOCK AND I THINK IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING BIGGER.
COFFEE
SO, WHY ARE WE SITTING HERE?
WHAT'S THE RUSH?
ARE YOU GOING TO HELP HIM?
MAYBE.
CAN I COME?
NO.
BE A GOOD STORY FOR THE "SPECULATOR."
TOUGH SHIT.

RIGHT NOW WE HAVE A BIGGER PROBLEM. DO *NOT* TURN AND LOOK, BUT THERE'S A GUY SITTING AT THE COUNTER. HE'S A *FIEND* AND HE'S BEEN WATCHING US.
WHAT THE HELL'S A FIEND?
LIKE A GHOUL EXCEPT THEY EAT HUMAN FLESH.
LOVELY.
THEN WHAT'S HE DOING IN A DINER?
SHAKE
FRENCH FRIES ONION RINGS
HAMBURGER SPECIAL
COFFEE
OH.
THIS IS WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I ALWAYS HAVE SOME FREAK SHOW OR ANOTHER FUCKING WITH ME.
I NEED YOU TO GET OUT OF HERE. GET UP. DON'T LOOK AT HIM. I'LL CALL YOU LATER.
ARE YOU SURE--
SCRAM, SISTER.

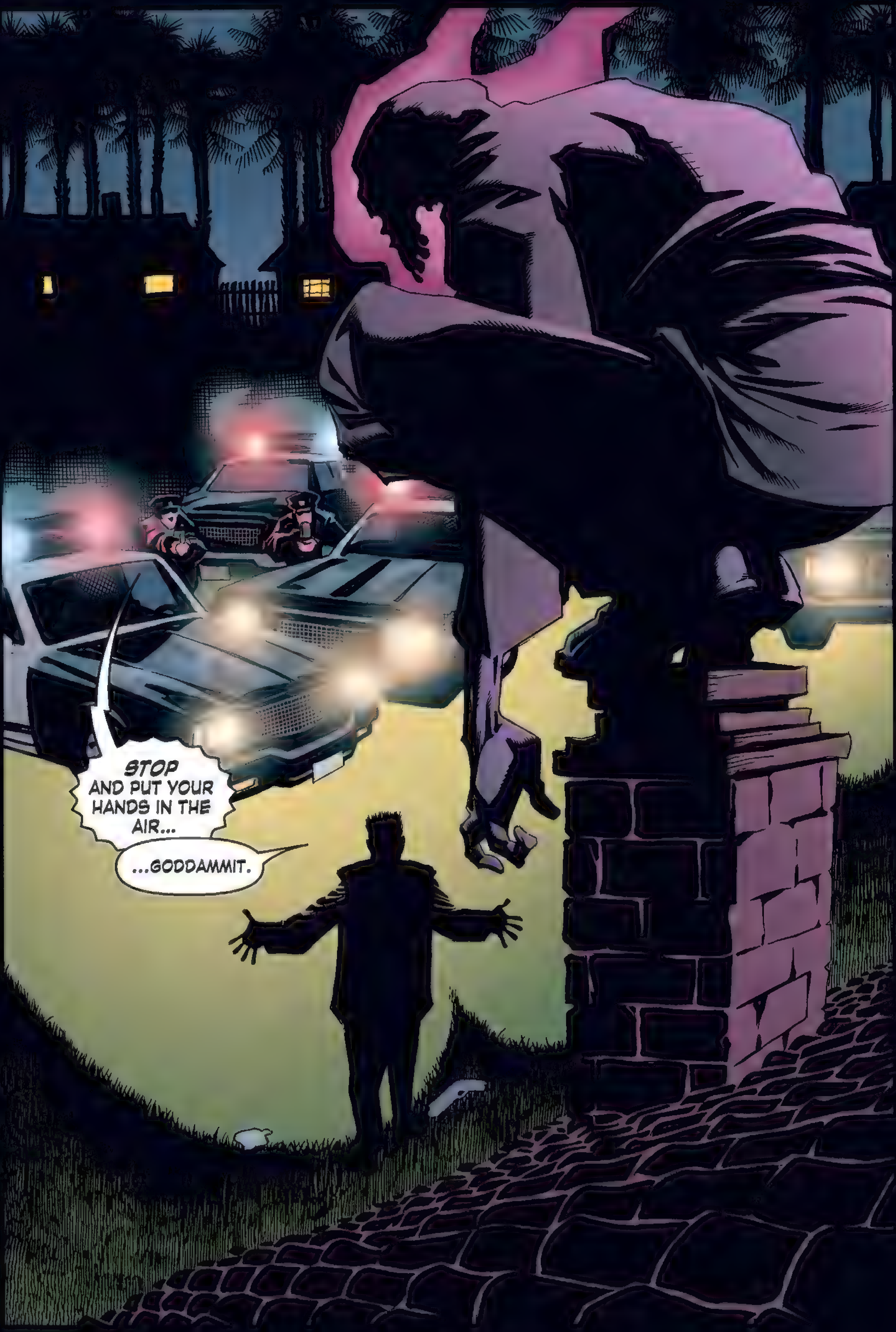
YOU GOT A BEEF, PAL?
I AIN'T YOUR PAL AND YOU BETTER SHOVE OFF BEFORE I SHOVE YOU OFF.
Oh, MAN...
WOK!
WHY ARE YOU *TAILING* ME? SPILL IT OR I SPILL YOUR BRAINS!
SCREW YOU!
SCREW ME?
SCREW YOU!
BLAM BLAM BLAM

CRAK!
Uh...STOP SHOOTING THAT GUY.
HE'S NOT A GUY. HE'S NOT--
--HUMAN.
RESH PIES
HSSS SSSS!
I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS, MCDONALD! I'LL GET YOUUUU!
SMASH
COUPLE MORE BULLETS IN THE HEAD AND HE'D BE DEAD.
SORRY.

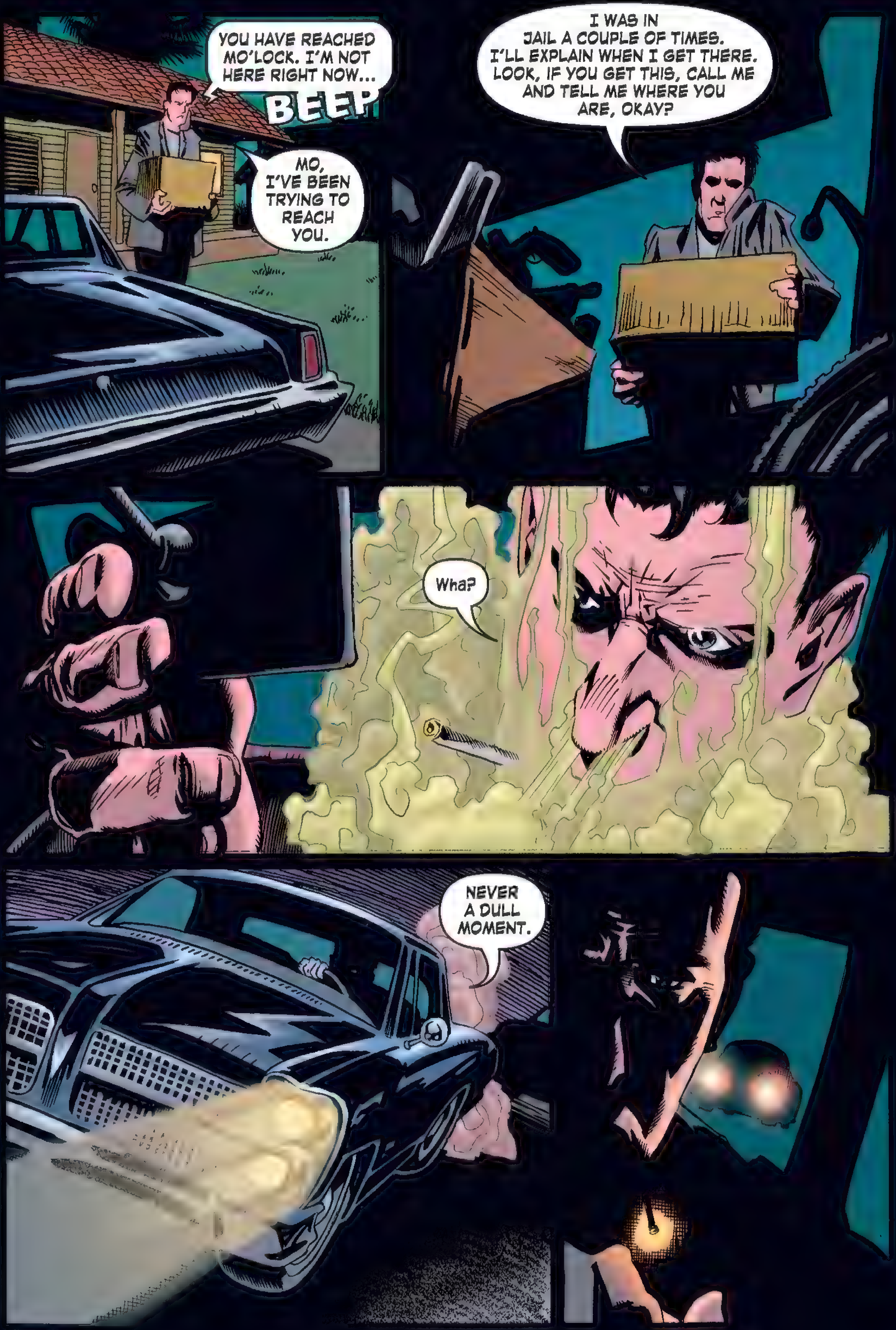

STOP AND PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR --
GODDAMMIT.
POLICE
LATER.
MO'LOCK! BILLY RAY! I'M BACK!
SORRY I TOOK SO LONG, BUT I HAD TO TALK TO SABRINA THEN I HAD A RUN-IN WITH SOME ASSHOLE FIEND AND THEN I GOT PINCHED SO I...
HELLOO?
CAL
MO'LOCK

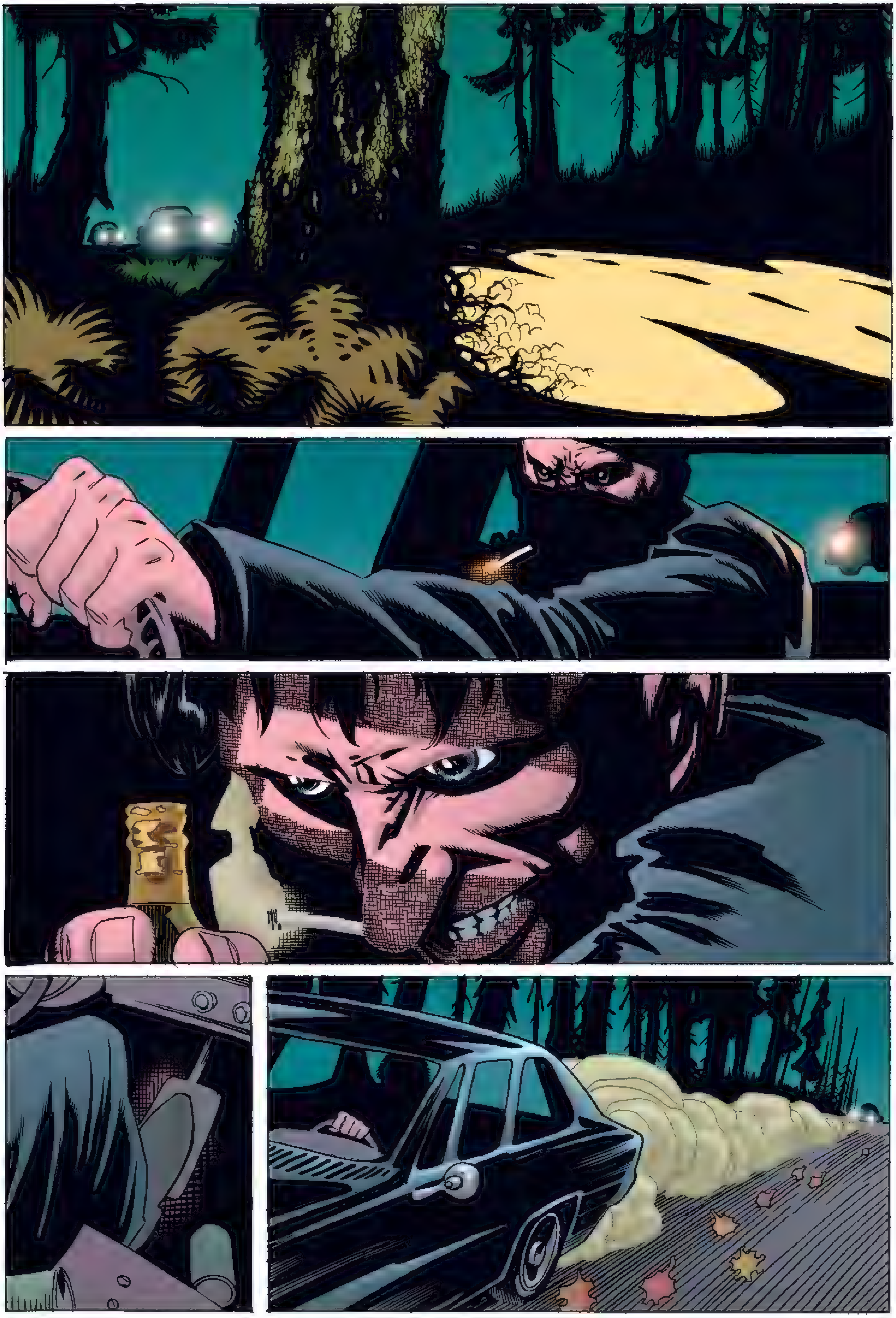

Cal-
Billy Ray and I drove down to start investigating. Meet you there.
Sincerely, Mo'Lock.
P.S.: Map and directions on back.
Huh. THERE IT IS.
CRAZY-ASS GHOUL.
FINALLY SOME PEACE! NO REASON TO RUSH OFF. THE GHOUL CAN GET THINGS STARTED, AND I CAN CATCH UP ON MY DRINKING.
Huh? BACK FOR MORE ALREADY?
LET ME SEE-- I KNOW I PUT IT HERE SOMEWHERE...

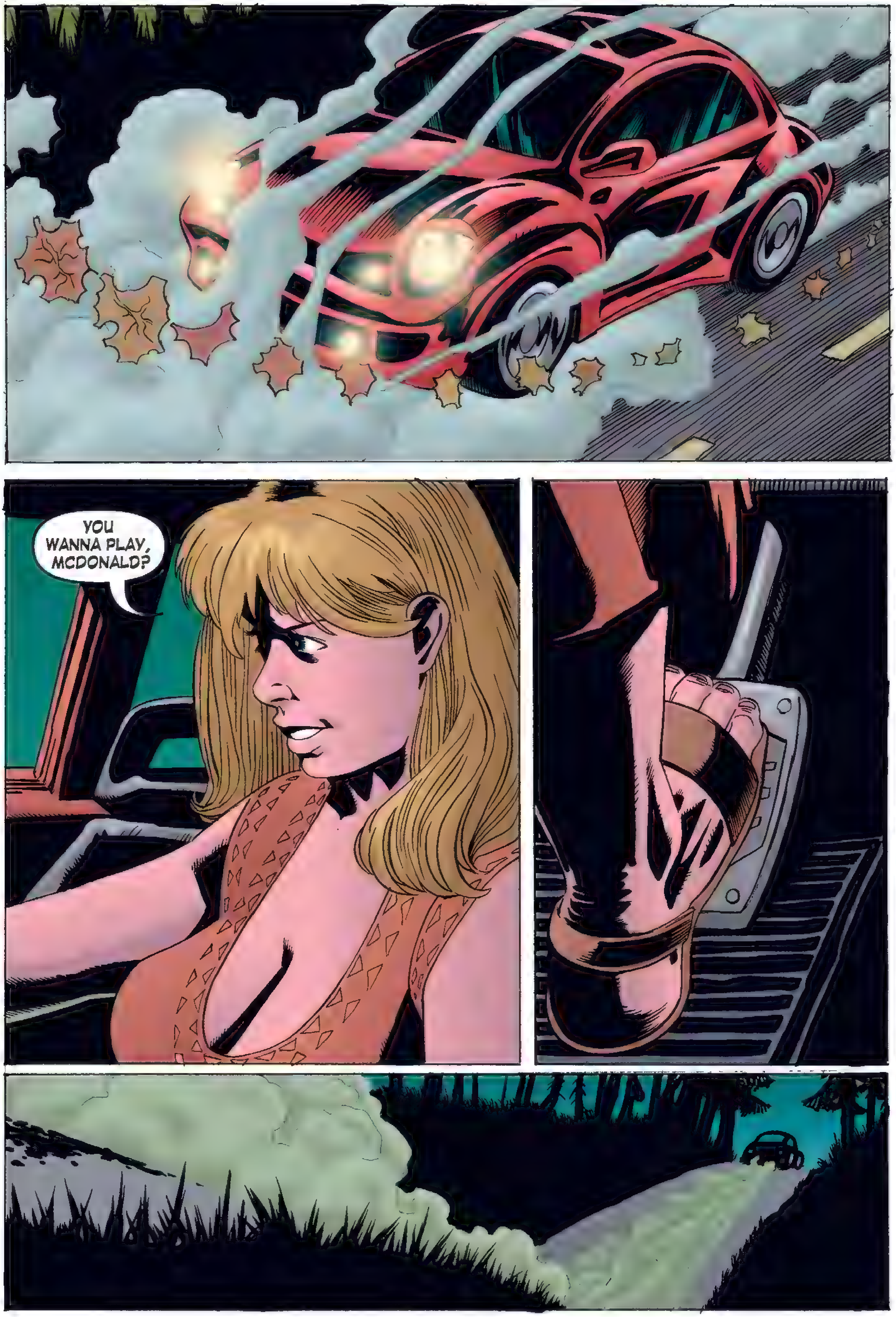
THERE IT IS!
BOOOM
ERP.
GODDANG *FREAKS!* STAY OFFA MY LAND!
WHERE'D HE GO?
Oh...


STOP AND PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR...
...GODDAMMIT.

TWO ARRESTS IN ONE NIGHT. I'M IMPRESSED.
POLICE
CAN IT, BRUEGER. I TOLD YOU I HAD A "SUSPECT" OUTSIDE MY WINDOW.
AND NOW YOU'RE HEADED DOWN SOUTH TO INVESTIGATE A TOWN WITH A POSSIBLE DEMON PROBLEM. QUITE A LIFE YOU GOT GOING THERE, MCDONALD.
JUST TRY TO KEEP IT CLEAN. I HEAR YOU BEEN SEEING SABRINA LYNCH FROM THAT "SPECULATOR" RAG. FINALLY FOUND SOMEONE WHO BUYS ALL YOUR CRAP, HUH?
MNSTR MN
JEALOUS?
PLEASE.


YOU HAVE REACHED MO'LOCK. I'M NOT HERE RIGHT NOW...
BEEP
MO, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU.
I WAS IN JAIL A COUPLE OF TIMES. I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN I GET THERE. LOOK, IF YOU GET THIS, CALL ME AND TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE, OKAY?
Wha?
NEVER A DULL MOMENT.



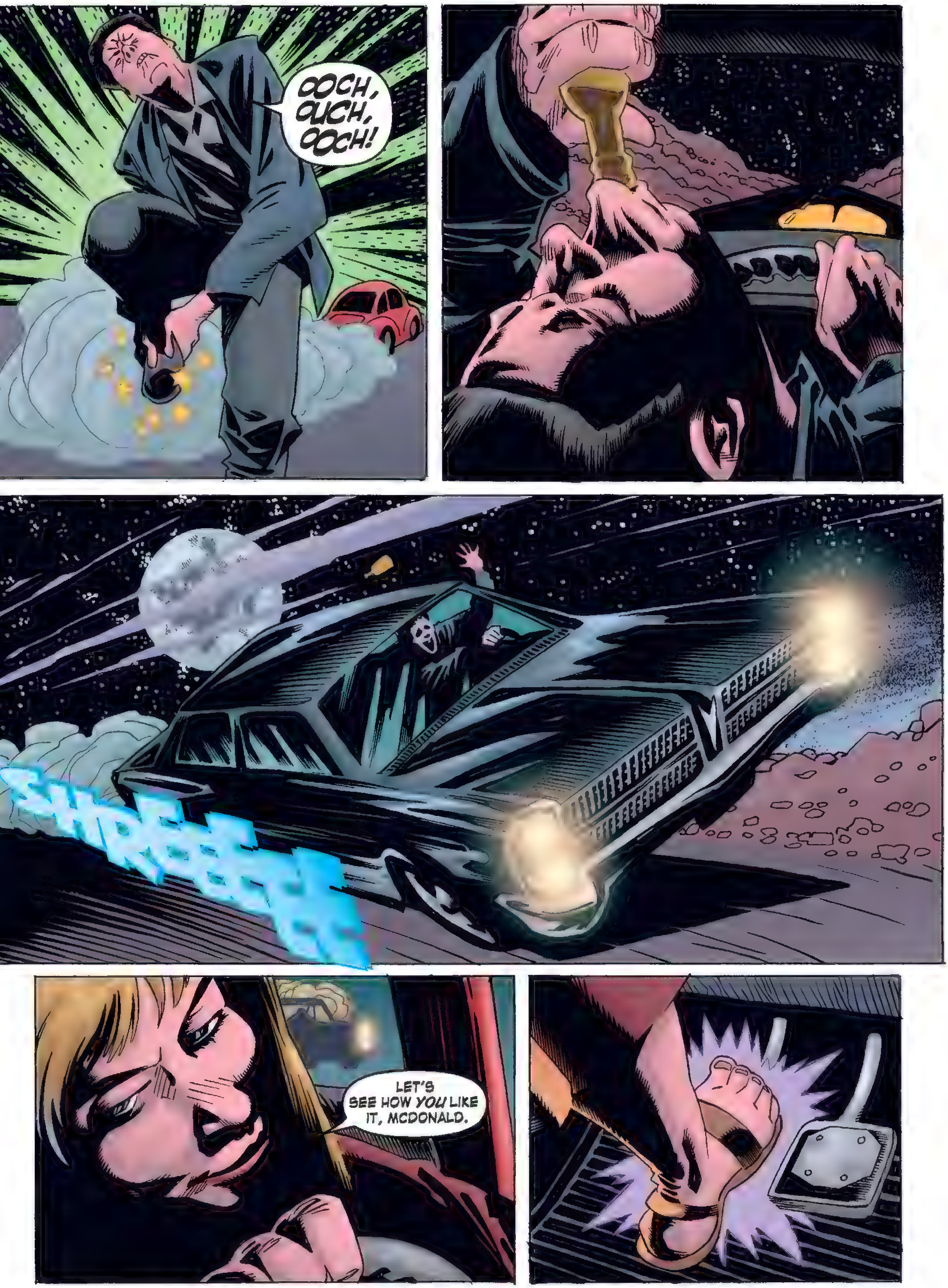

YOU WANNA PLAY, MCDONALD?

ENTERING ORANGE

SHIT!
I LOST HIM.
OH NO!

CAL! CAL! ARE YOU OKAY?!
OHMYGOD! CAL! CAL!
W...WHAT? I DON'T WANNA GO TO SCHOOL.
YOU BASTARD!
OH, IT'S YOU. I GOT SO FAR AHEAD OF YOU I THOUGHT I'D CATCH SOME Z'S.

THAT'S NOT FUNNY! I THOUGHT YOU WERE HURT!
AW COME ON, BABE! I *AM* HURT! I HAVE A HEMORRHOID THE SIZE OF A SOFTBALL!
COME ON... I'M SORRY, OKAY? HOW ABOUT WHEN WE GET TO TOWN WE GET BOMBED TOGETHER?
EVER THE ROMANTIC.
I SAID I WAS SORRY.
OKAY. LAST ONE TO TOWN IS A HOPELESS ALCOHOLIC ASSHOLE.
SKREEE
AHHH!


OOCH, OUCH, OOCH!
SHREEEEE
LET'S SEE HOW *YOU* LIKE IT, MCDONALD.

SHKRRKKRKRK
TNKK

DON'T DISH IT OUT IF YOU CAN'T TAKE IT, MONSTER MAN.
AHHHH!
OOCH, OUCH, OOCH!
OHHHHHHH.
HO HO
HO HO
FUCK, SHE IS *TOO* COOL.

ARBUCKS
WEIRD.
WHERE IS EVERYBODY?
THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW.
YOU GOTTA BE FUCKING KIDDING ME.

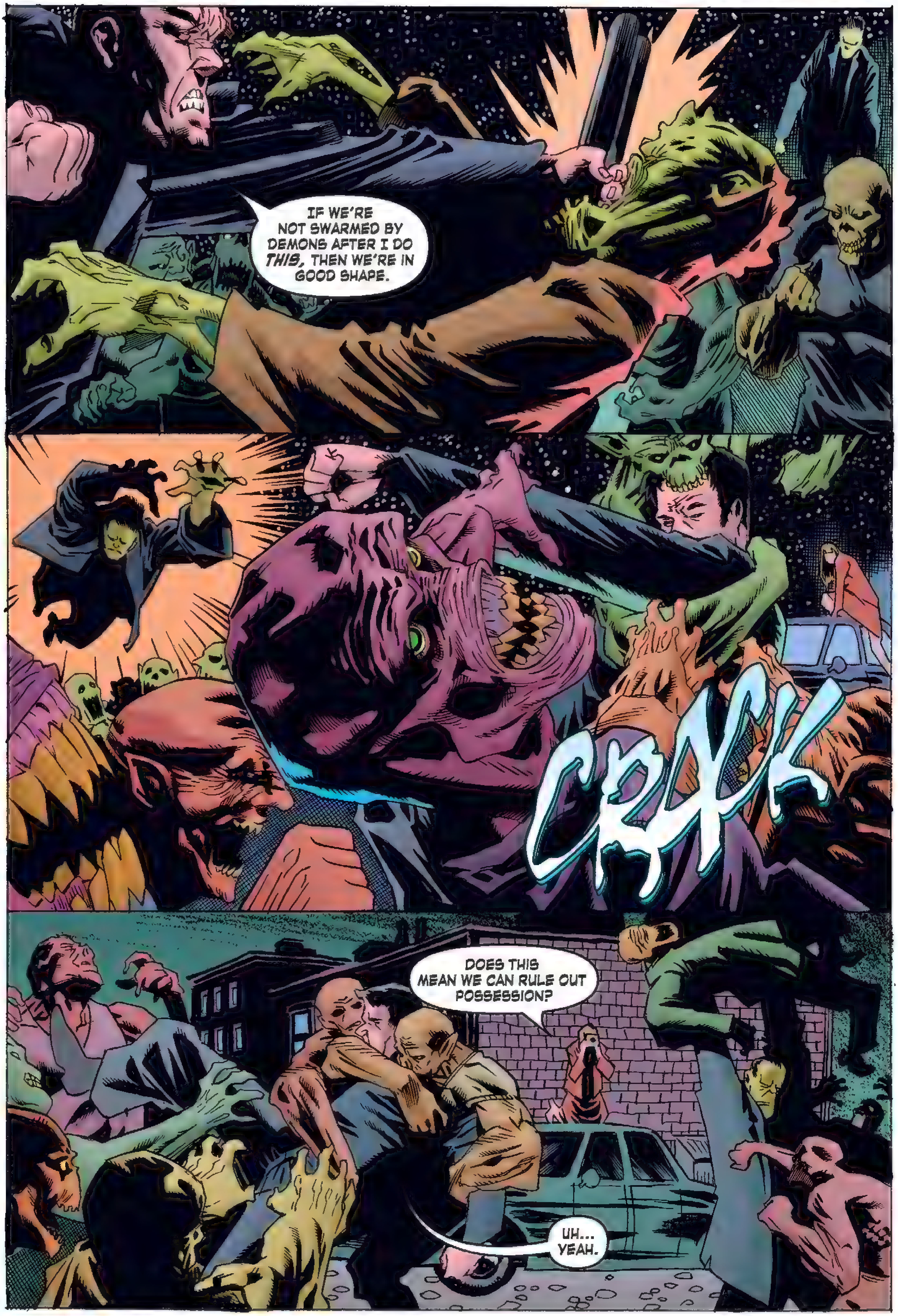
BARBER
WELL, WHEREVER THEY WENT, THEY LEFT QUICK.
I WONDER WHERE MO'LOCK AND THE PUNK ARE?
DIDN'T HE PUT THE KID'S ADDRESS ON THE MAP?
OH YEAH, RIGHT. LOOKS LIKE THEY WENT...
...THAT WAY.
SHIT.
WE BETTER LOAD UP. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
NOTHING. I'LL SHOOT WITH MY CAMERA.
WHISKEY

YOU'RE NOT SOME KIND OF HIPPIE, ARE YOU?
NO.
YOU'RE WASTED.
DEFINE "WASTED."
THANKS FOR LETTING ME COME, BY THE WAY.
YOU FOLLOWED ME.
SAME DIFFERENCE.
SO FAR WE'RE OKAY. AS LONG AS THAT KID AND THE GHOUL HAVEN'T GONE OFF AND GOT IN ANY...

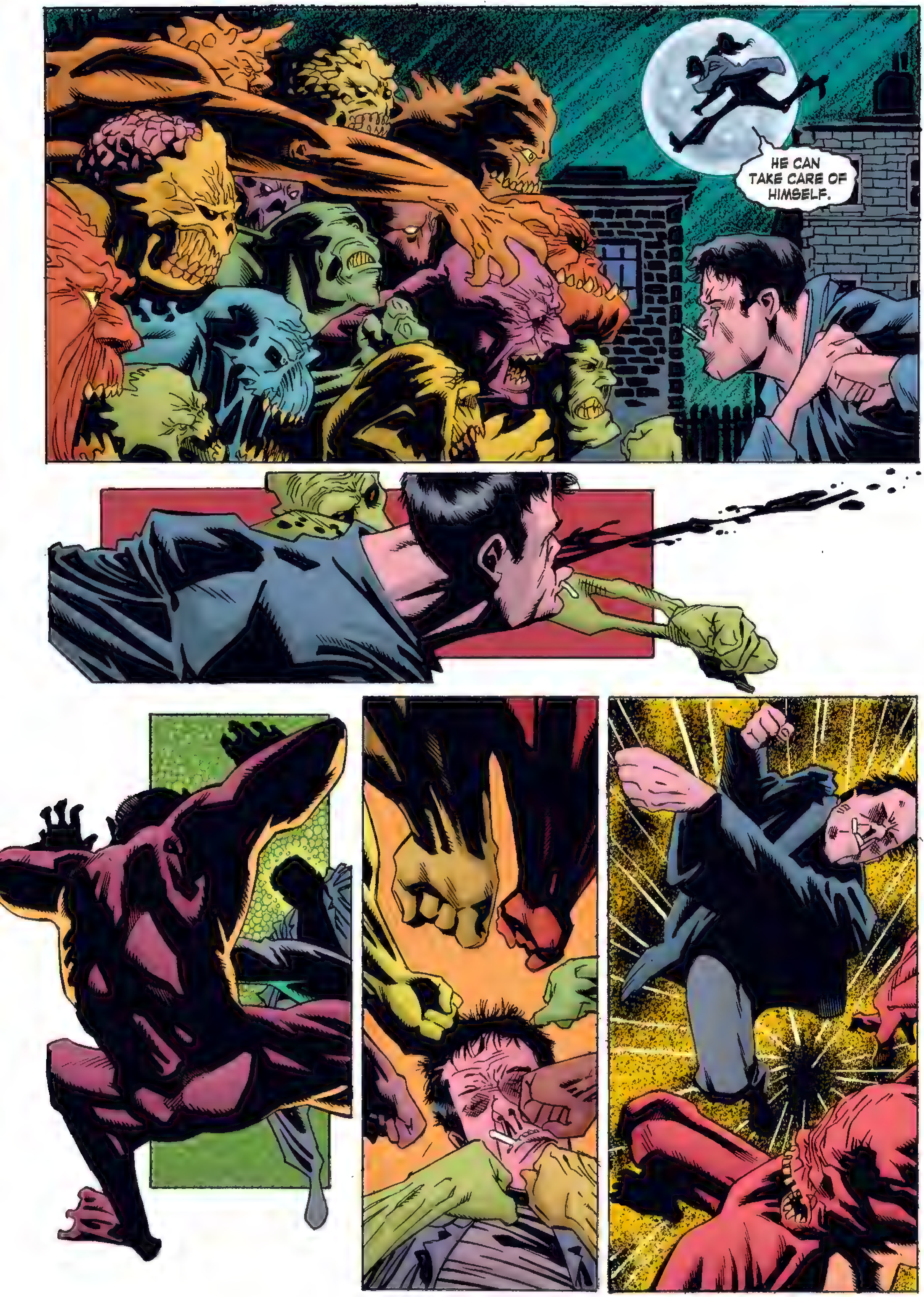
...TROUBLE.

HEY, LOSERS!
THAT'S RIGHT. I'M TALKING TO YOU.
HOW ABOUT YOU UNTIE MY FRIEND THERE AND THEN WE'LL GET DOWN TO SOME HEAD BUSTING.
UH-OH.

GIMME ONE OF THEM GUNS, MCDONALD.
YEAH, I THOUGHT SO.
WHERE'S THE KID, MO?
WHEN THESE GENTLEMEN APPEARED HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT "HAULING ASS HOME."
NICE.
ANY IDEA WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE?
THEY SEEM ENSLAVED BY A DEMONIC FORCE, THE SOURCE OF WHICH IS STILL A MYSTERY.
WE GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT INCANTATION THAT RETARDED KID USED.
SHOULDN'T WE BE SHOOTING OR SOMETHING?
I DON'T WANNA SHOOT THEM IF THEY'RE JUST INFLUENCED BY A DEMON, NOT POSSESSED. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE, YOU KNOW.
IF THE DEMON'S *IN* 'EM, THEN WE SHOOT BECAUSE THEY'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD ANYWAY. BUT IF THEY'RE JUST IN SOME KIND OF *TRANCE*, WE CAN ONLY KICK THEIR ASSES.
MAKES SENSE, I GUESS. HOW CAN YOU TELL?


IF WE'RE NOT SWARMED BY DEMONS AFTER I DO *THIS*, THEN WE'RE IN GOOD SHAPE.
CRACK
DOES THIS MEAN WE CAN RULE OUT POSSESSION?
UH... YEAH.

SO, THEY'RE UNDER SOME SORT OF INFLUENCE, RIGHT? WHAT'S THE PLAN?
THIS *IS* THE PLAN, SISTER!
OOF
LAST MAN STANDING!
I NEED YOU TO GET SABRINA OUT OF HERE.
I CAN DEAL WITH THESE WEAK-BRAINED BASTARDS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
FIND THE KID. FIND OUT WHAT HE DID SO WE KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE, GODDAMMIT!
I'M ON IT.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET OUT OF HERE, MS. LYNCH?
DOES THE POPE SHIT IN THE WOODS?
WHAT ABOUT CAL?
HE WANTS US TO FIND THE KID. HE'LL BE FINE.


HE CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF.

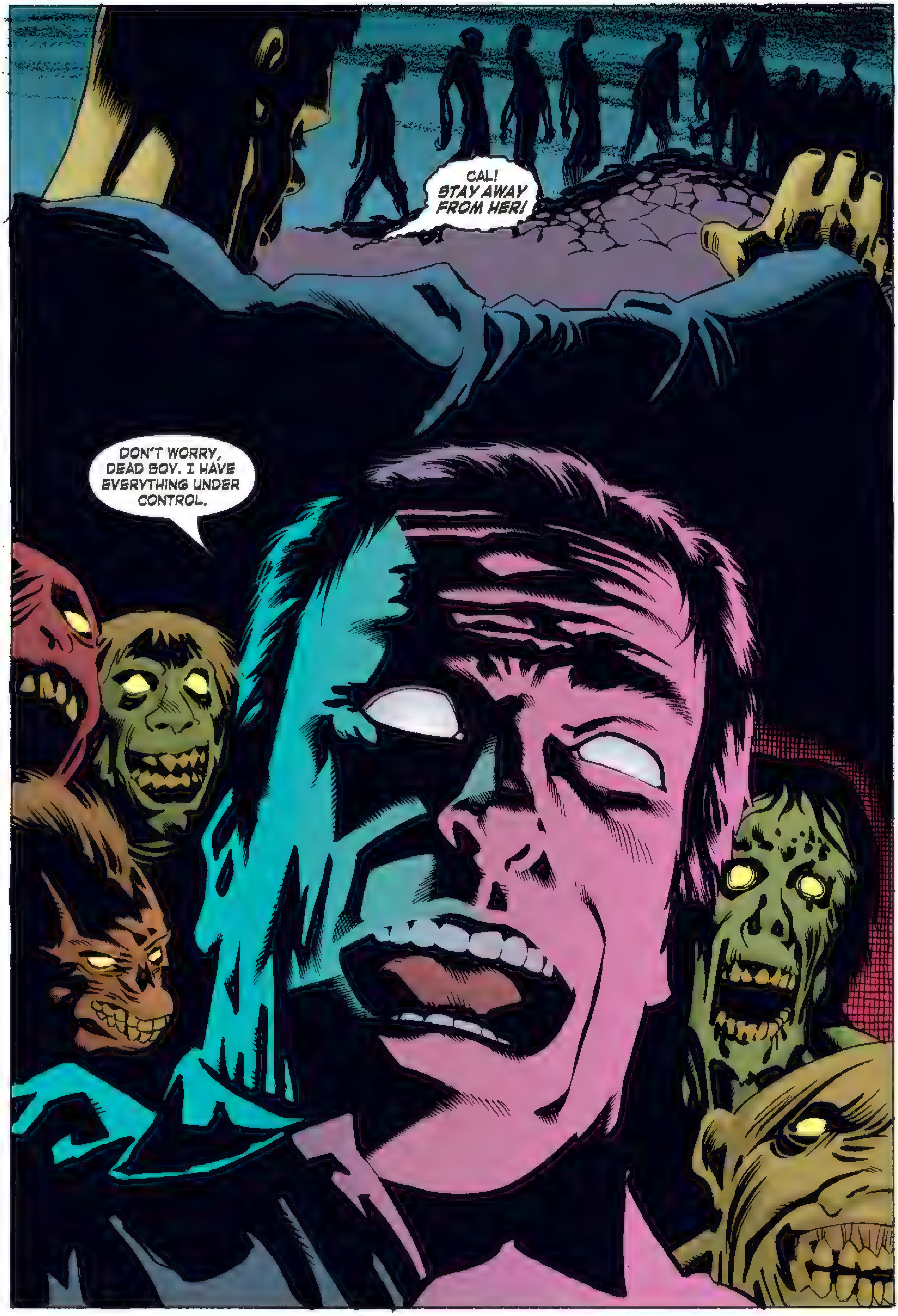
KNOK KNOK
YOU SURE THIS IS THE PLACE?
IT'S THE ADDRESS HE GAVE ME.
DUDE, I WAS JUST GONNA COME BACK FOR YOU!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU LIVED WITH YOUR MOTHER.
I DO. SHE'S AT HER BOYFRIEND'S TRAILER.
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOU UNLEASHED.
BUT I TOLD YOU--
YOU TOLD US *DICK.* NOW WE WANT SOME ANSWERS.
WHO'S SHE?
CAL'S GIRLFRIEND. I'D DO AS SHE ASKS.
CHIL
MAMMARY FEST
I KNOW THIS LOOKS BAD.

IS THIS THE "LOVE SPELL" YOU TOLD US ABOUT?
SPELLS
WELL I...UM... YEAH.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'VE DONE? DO YOU KNOW WHOM AND WHAT YOU'VE UNLEASHED?!
WE MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY!
SPELLS
CLUB
HMM?
SPELLS

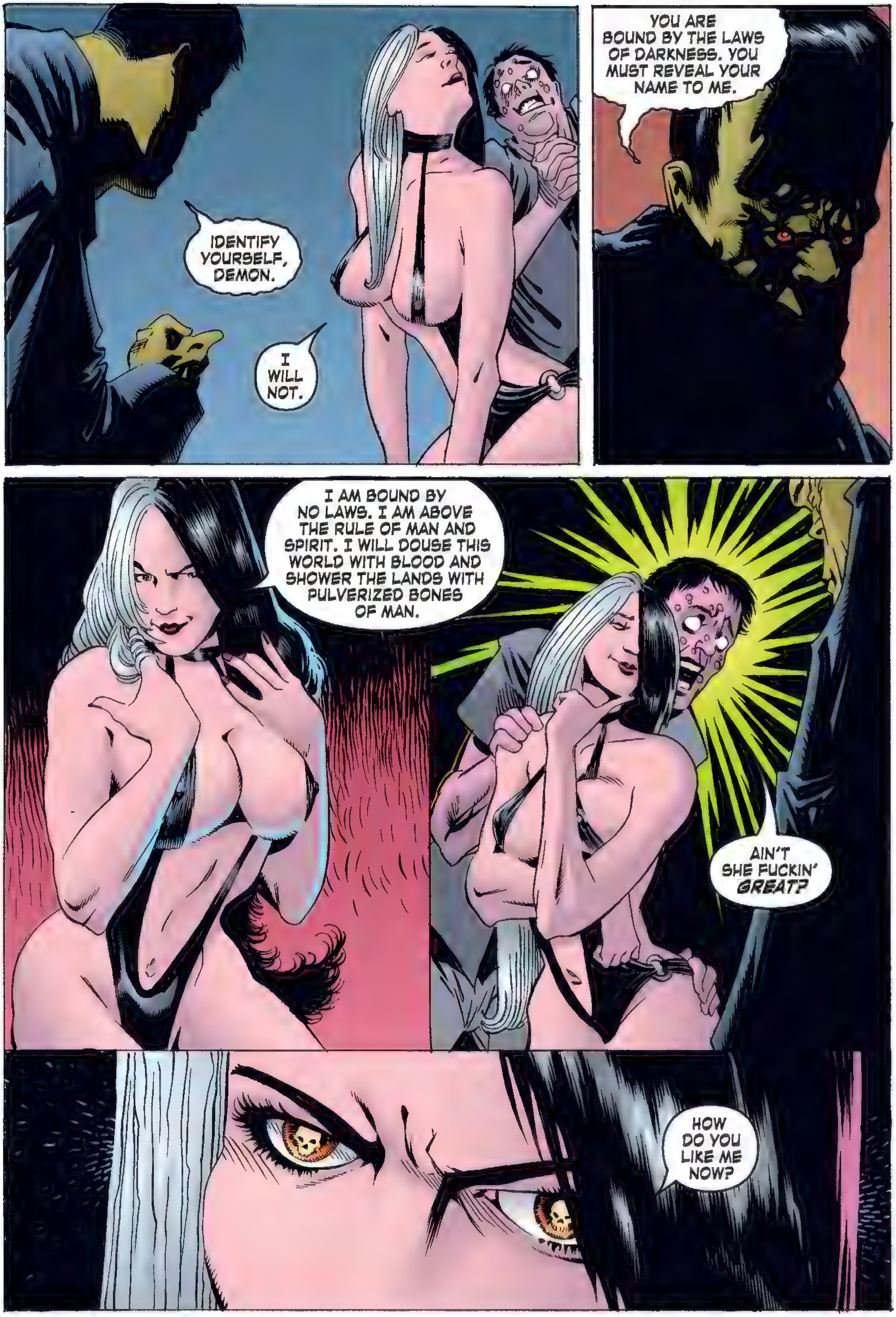
COME ON YOU FEEBLE-MINDED FREAKS!! WHO'S NEXT?!
HOW ABOUT ME, MR. MCDONALD...
...WILL I DO?

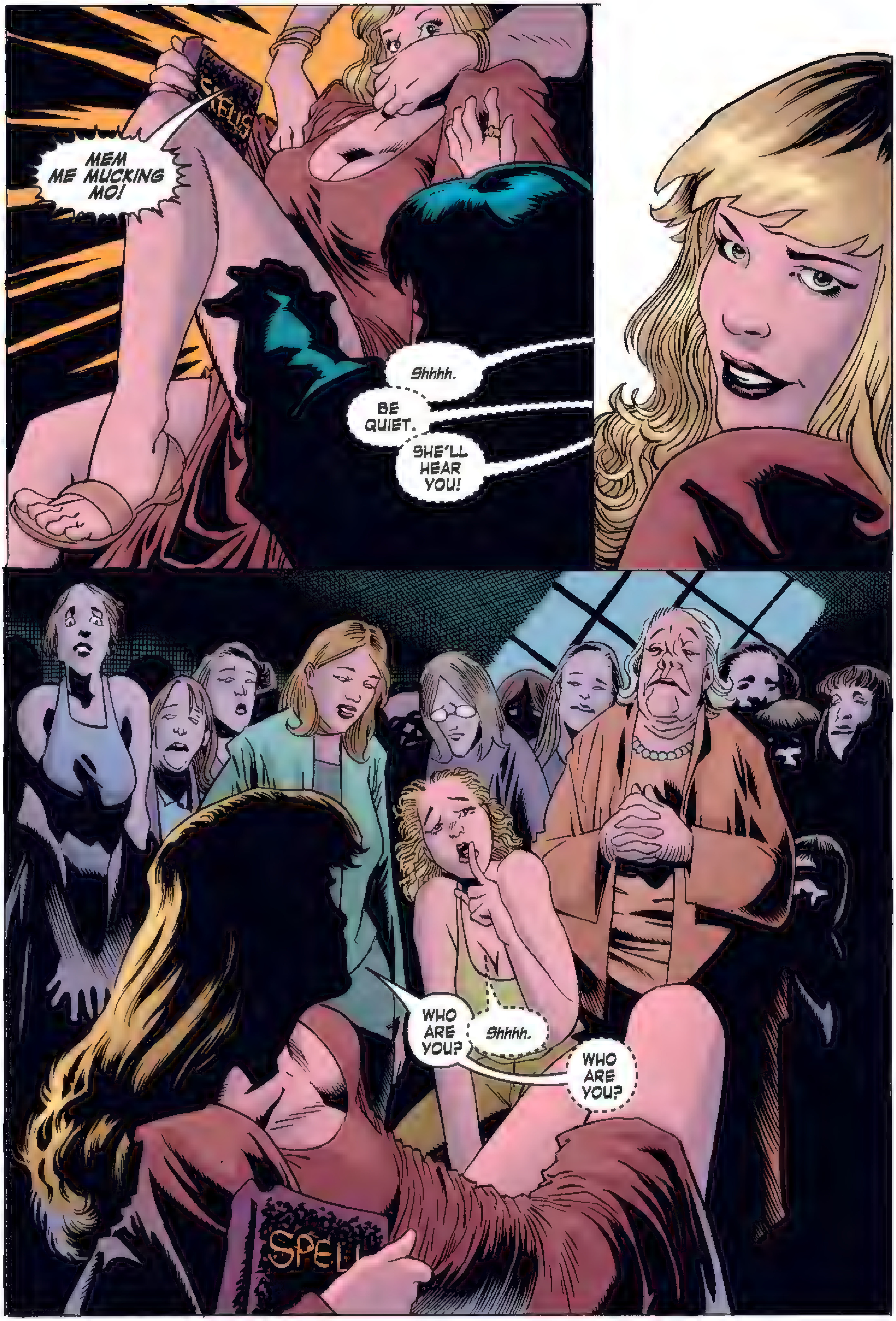
LIBRARY
HELLO?
SPELLS
I JUST WANTED TO--

YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD US.
I WANTED TO TELL YOU, BUT SHE SAID SHE'D DO HORRIBLE THINGS AND THEN SHE SENT ME TO L.A. TO GET MR. MCDONALD.
SHE SENT YOU?
SHE SAID HE WAS THE *ONE* MAN WHO COULD STOP HER... AND THAT WE SHOULD KILL HIM. WHEN I SAID *NO* SHE PUT THAT POSSESSION ON ME!
CAL.

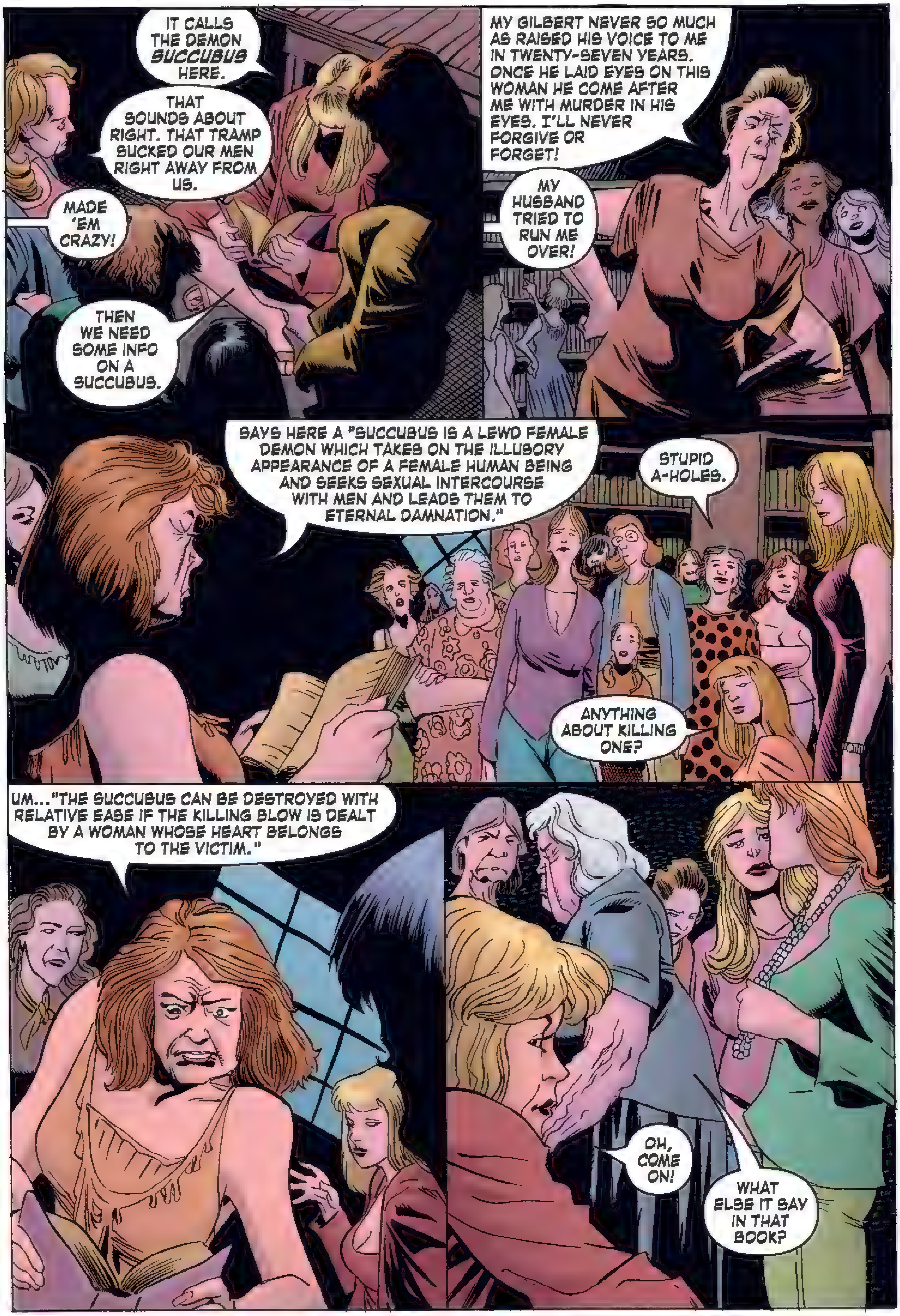

CAL! STAY AWAY FROM HER!
DON'T WORRY, DEAD BOY. I HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.

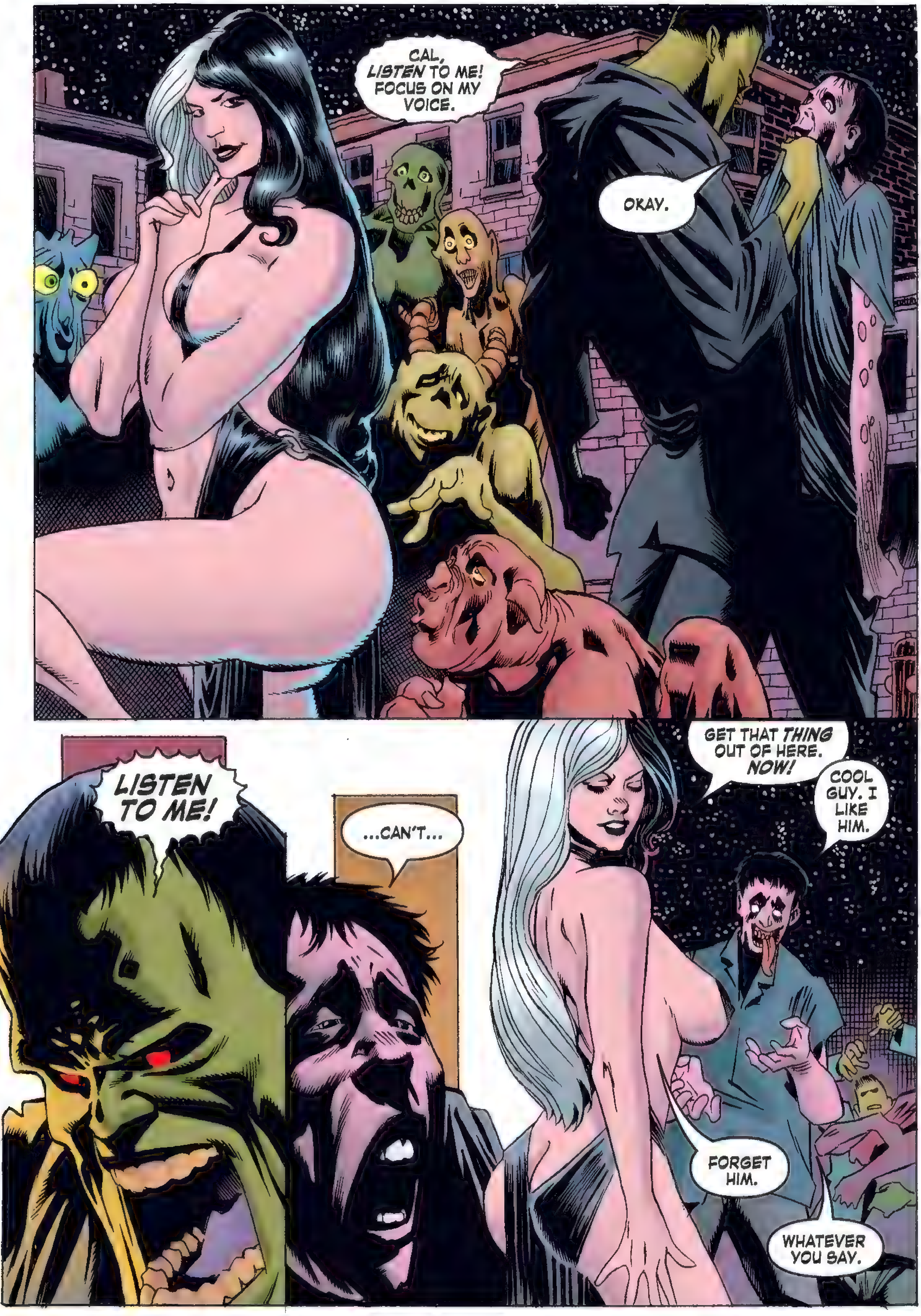
I FINALLY FEEL THE FUCKING MAGIC!
I'M TELLIN' YA, BUD, I FEEL GREAT! WHO KNEW THIS LOVE CRAP FELT THIS GOOD!
CAL, YOU MUST SHAKE IT OFF. FIGHT THE INFLUENCE OF THE SHE-DEMON.
STAY BACK! THE DETECTIVE IS MINE NOW, SOULLESS ONE.


IDENTIFY YOURSELF, DEMON.
I WILL NOT.
YOU ARE BOUND BY THE LAWS OF DARKNESS. YOU MUST REVEAL YOUR NAME TO ME.
I AM BOUND BY NO LAWS. I AM ABOVE THE RULE OF MAN AND SPIRIT. I WILL DOUSE THIS WORLD WITH BLOOD AND SHOWER THE LANDS WITH PULVERIZED BONES OF MAN.
AIN'T SHE FUCKIN' *GREAT?*
HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW?


SPELLS
MEM ME MUCKING MO!
Shhhh.
BE QUIET.
SHE'LL HEAR YOU!
WHO ARE YOU?
Shhhh.
WHO ARE YOU?
SPELL

WE LIVE HERE. WHO ARE YOU?
I'M HERE WITH THE GUY WHO CAME TO HELP YOU GUYS.
A GUY? *Pffft!* YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT HIM.
Shhh.
YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT.
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU KNOW SOME THINGS WE DON'T. I HAVE THIS BOOK I GOT FROM BILLY RAY BOB SOMETHING OR OTHER. IT HAS THE SPELL THAT CAUSED THIS MESS!
YOU SAYIN' BILLY INVITED THAT *BITCH* HERE?
I TOL' YOU HE'S NO DAMN GOOD. NO JOB, NOW THIS.
PEOPLE... CAN WE PLEASE... STAY ON TOPIC.


IT CALLS THE DEMON *SUCCUBUS* HERE.
THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT. THAT TRAMP SUCKED OUR MEN RIGHT AWAY FROM US.
MADE 'EM CRAZY!
THEN WE NEED SOME INFO ON A SUCCUBUS.
MY GILBERT NEVER SO MUCH AS RAISED HIS VOICE TO ME IN TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS. ONCE HE LAID EYES ON THIS WOMAN HE COME AFTER ME WITH MURDER IN HIS EYES. I'LL NEVER FORGIVE OR FORGET!
MY HUSBAND TRIED TO RUN ME OVER!
SAYS HERE A "SUCCUBUS IS A LEWD FEMALE DEMON WHICH TAKES ON THE ILLUSORY APPEARANCE OF A FEMALE HUMAN BEING AND SEEKS SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH MEN AND LEADS THEM TO ETERNAL DAMNATION."
STUPID A-HOLES.
ANYTHING ABOUT KILLING ONE?
UM..."THE SUCCUBUS CAN BE DESTROYED WITH RELATIVE EASE IF THE KILLING BLOW IS DEALT BY A WOMAN WHOSE HEART BELONGS TO THE VICTIM."
OH, COME ON!
WHAT ELSE IT SAY IN THAT BOOK?


CAL, *LISTEN* TO ME! FOCUS ON MY VOICE.
OKAY.
LISTEN TO ME!
...CAN'T...
GET THAT *THING* OUT OF HERE. *NOW!*
COOL GUY. I LIKE HIM.
FORGET HIM.
WHATEVER YOU SAY.

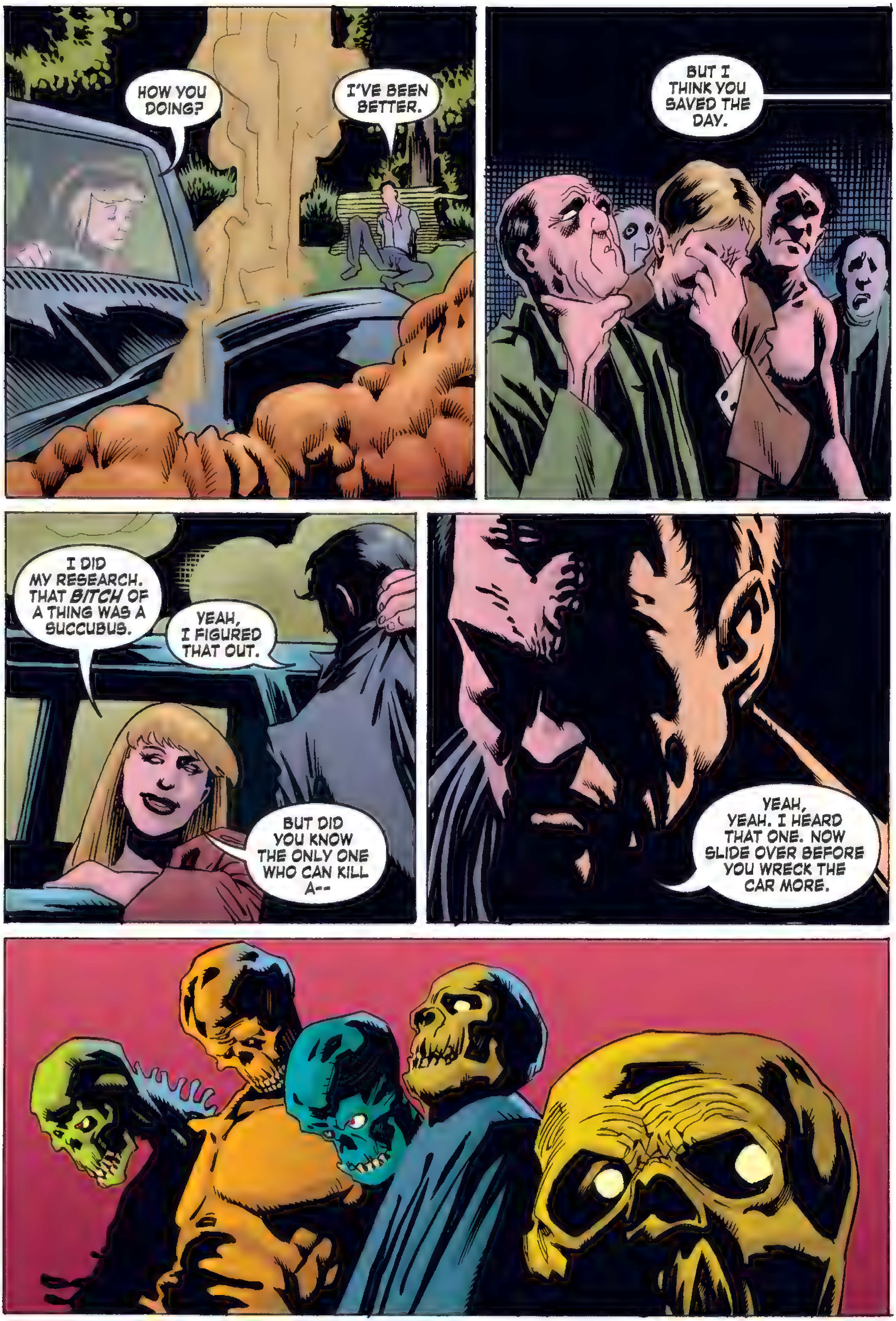
CAL?! YOU'VE GOT TO SNAP OUT OF IT, CAL!
COME WITH ME. YOU WANNA COME WITH ME, DON'T YOU?
SOUNDS GREAT.
YOU HAVE A SEAT, HONEY. RIGHT HERE. THAT'S IT.
THE OL' DOGS *ARE* TIRED.
CAAAAAL!
I'M GOING TO HAVE A SNACK OR TWO, THEN WE CAN ALL GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. BUT FIRST...
I'D LIKE TO-- URRRRRP --*SLIP* INTO SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE.

AHHHHH, THAT'SSSSS NICCCCE.
YOU NEED MORE ROOM, LET ME KNOW.
KARSWELL PARK DED. 1956

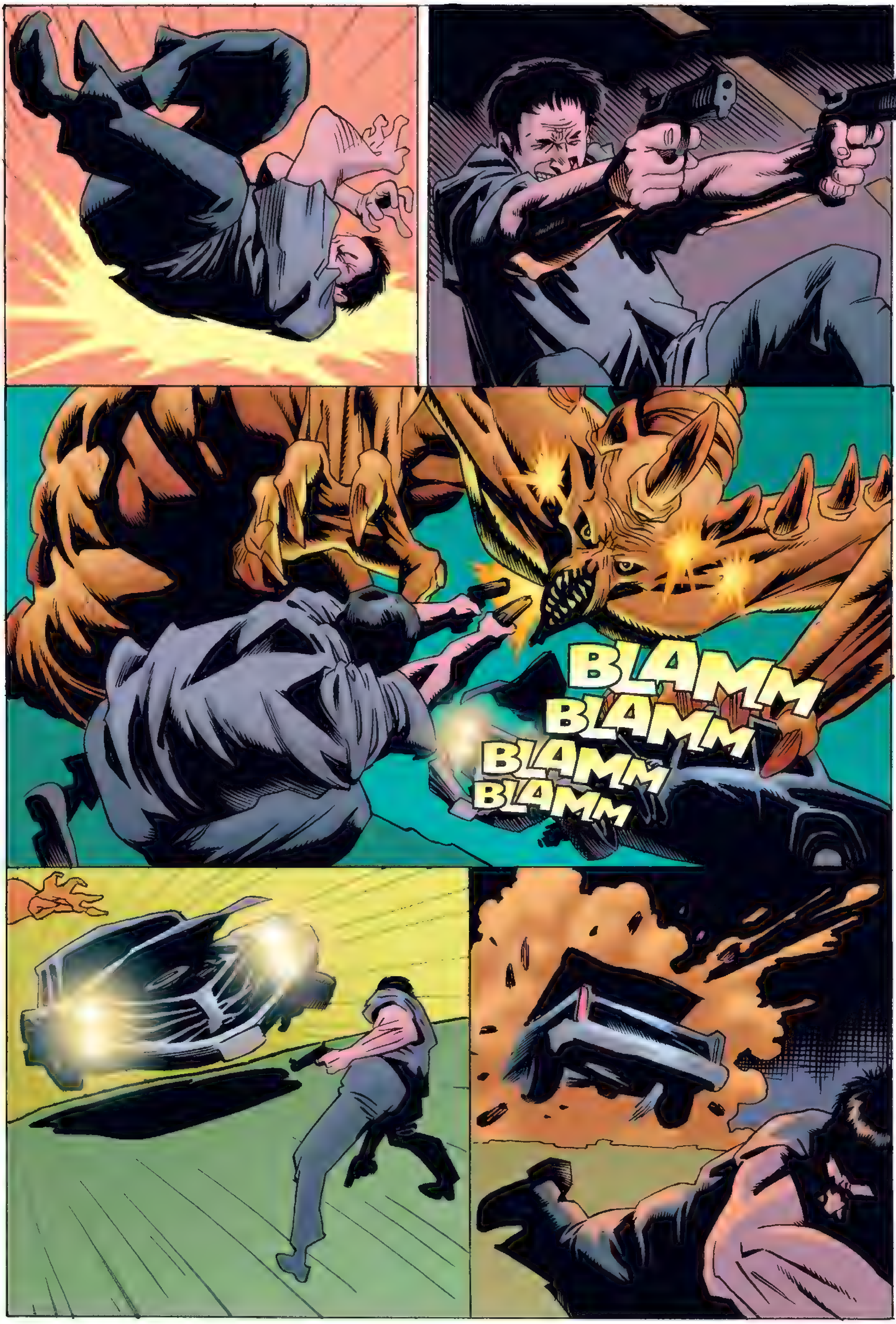
MR. BURTON, I'LL START WITH YOU.
YES, MA'AM.
GIVE MOMMA SOME SUGARY SOUL.
SMACK

YOUR TURN, MR. BENNETT!
SMACK
NOW WE BEGIN.
I WANT YOU TO FIND THE WOMEN. DON'T BRING THEM TO ME. KILL THEM. KILL THEM ALL.
VROOM
VROOM
HEY, IS THAT MY--

AAAAGH!
VROOOM
--CAR?


HOW YOU DOING?
I'VE BEEN BETTER.
BUT I THINK YOU SAVED THE DAY.
I DID MY RESEARCH. THAT *BITCH* OF A THING WAS A SUCCUBUS.
YEAH, I FIGURED THAT OUT.
BUT DID YOU KNOW THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL A--
YEAH, YEAH. I HEARD THAT ONE. NOW SLIDE OVER BEFORE YOU WRECK THE CAR MORE.

ARRRHHH!
MNSTR MAN
AHHHH!
MY CAR!
YOU OKAY, BABE?
YOU MIGHT WANT TO MOVE.
Huh?


BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM

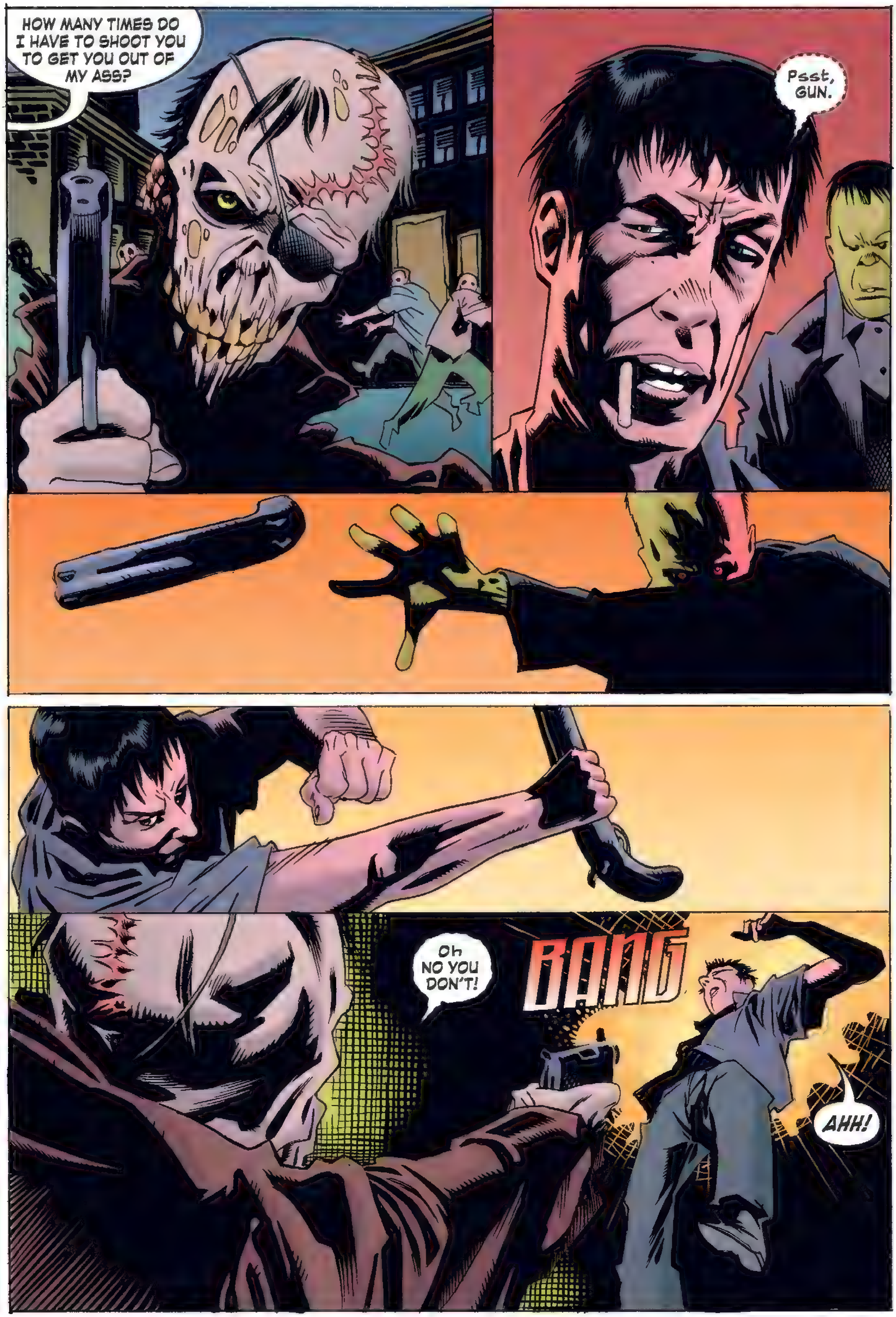
THOK
THOK
THOK
FWAP
TANGG

STAY BA--
KRAK
COME ON.
EXCUSE ME, BITCH?

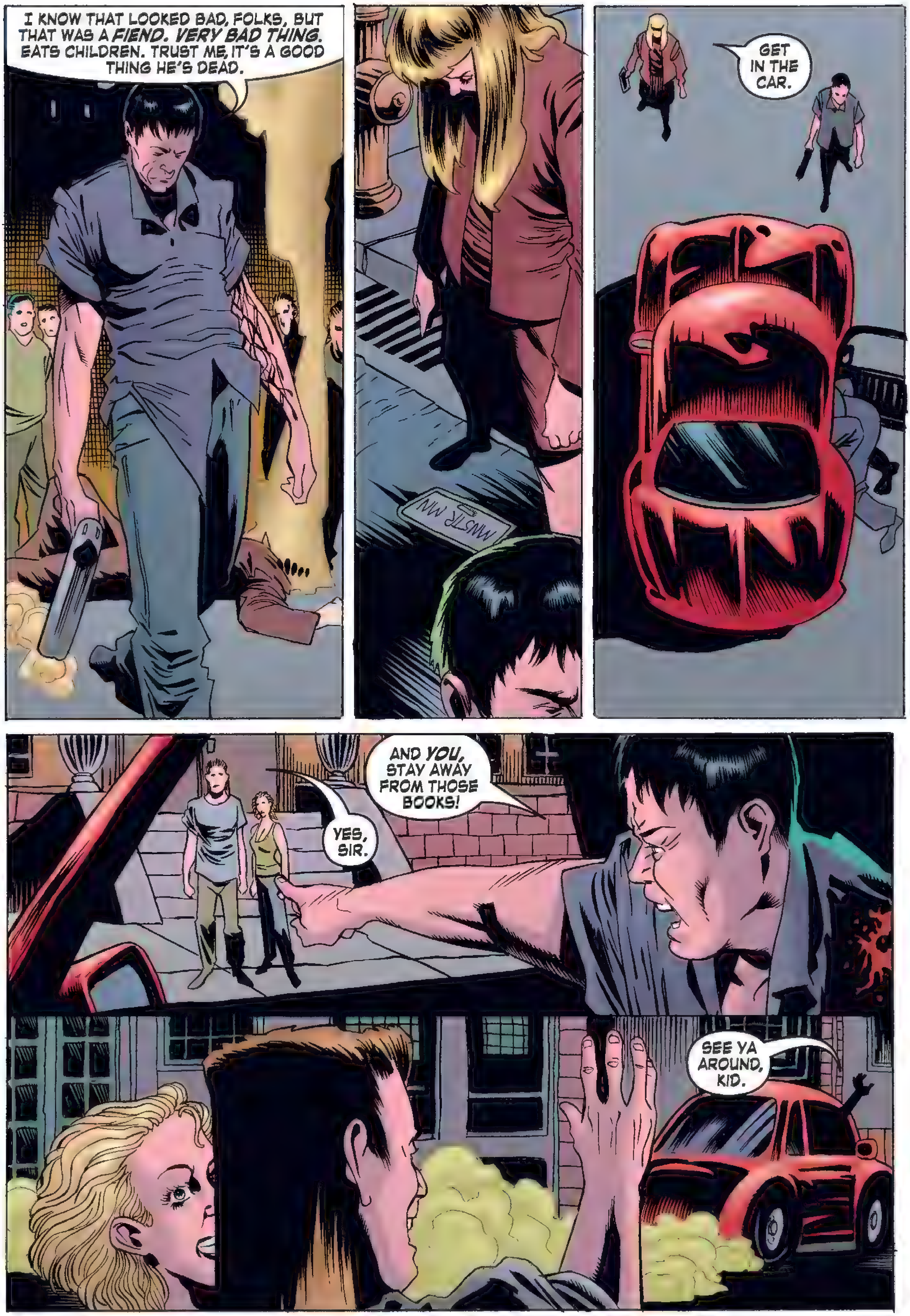
GET AWAY FROM MY MAN.
BLAMM
FOP

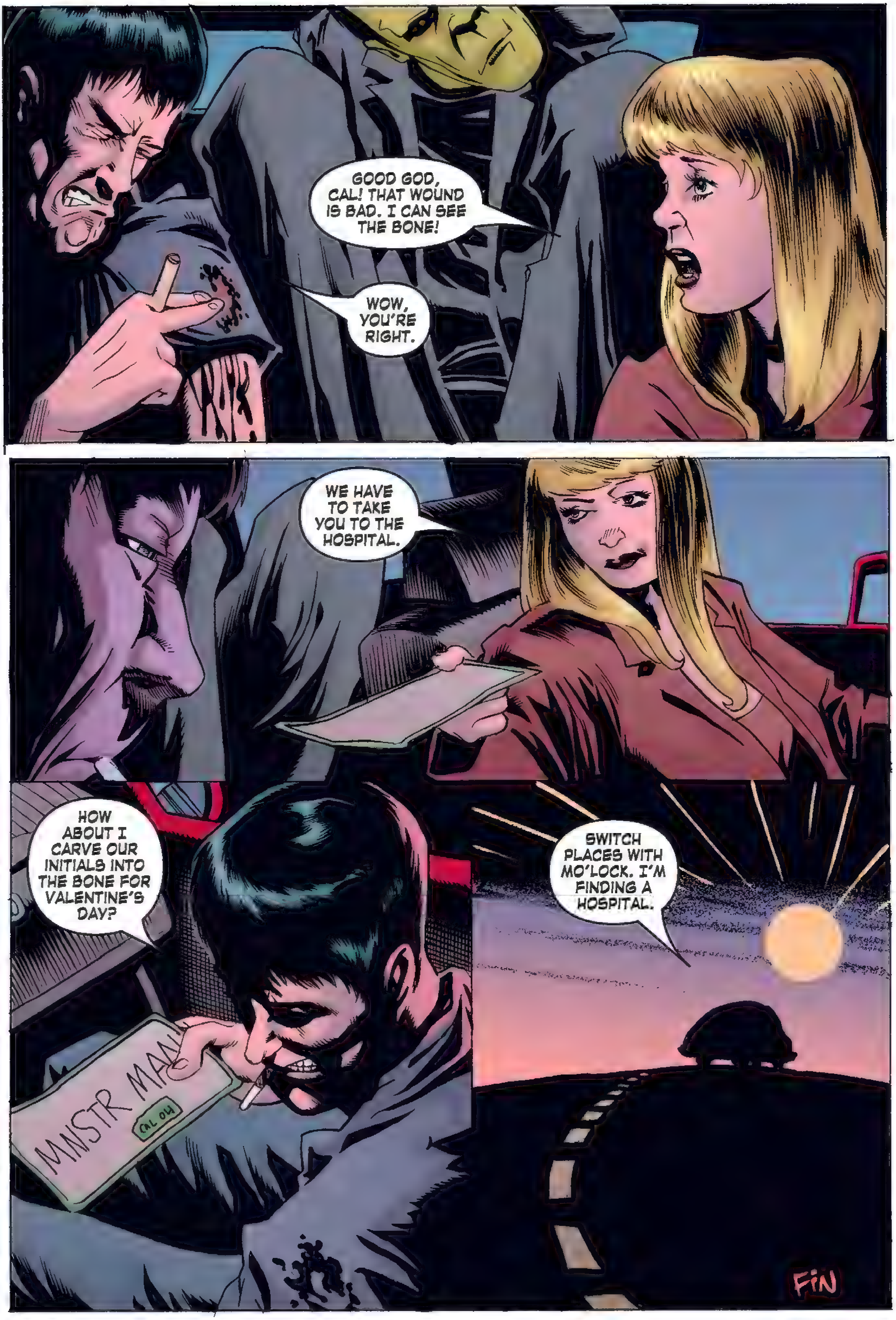
WOW.
YEAH, *WOW.*
WHAT'RE YOU STARING AT, UGLY?
A RHYME ABOUT KISSING IN A TREE COMES TO MIND.

I'M NOT DRIVING THIS WIND-UP TOY.
NOBODY'S ASKING.
NICE SHOT, BY THE WAY.
LEMME KNOW THE NEXT TIME I CAN SAVE YOUR ASS.
OKAY FOLKS, TAKE CARE. EVERYTHING'S FINE NOW.
HEY, MCDONALD...
Oh, PLEASE...


HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SHOOT YOU TO GET YOU OUT OF MY ASS?
Psst, GUN.
Oh NO YOU DON'T!
BANG
AHH!

SONOFABITCH!
BOOM
BOOOM
BOOM


I KNOW THAT LOOKED BAD, FOLKS, BUT THAT WAS A *FIEND. VERY BAD THING.* EATS CHILDREN. TRUST ME, IT'S A GOOD THING HE'S DEAD.
MNSTR MN
GET IN THE CAR.
AND *YOU*, STAY AWAY FROM THOSE BOOKS!
YES, SIR.
SEE YA AROUND, KID.


GOOD GOD, CAL! THAT WOUND IS BAD. I CAN SEE THE BONE!
WOW, YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE HAVE TO TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.
HOW ABOUT I CARVE OUR INITIALS INTO THE BONE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY?
MNSTR MAN
CAL 04
SWITCH PLACES WITH MO'LOCK. I'M FINDING A HOSPITAL.
FIN

SUPERNATURAL FREAK MACHINE

KELLEY JONES 04

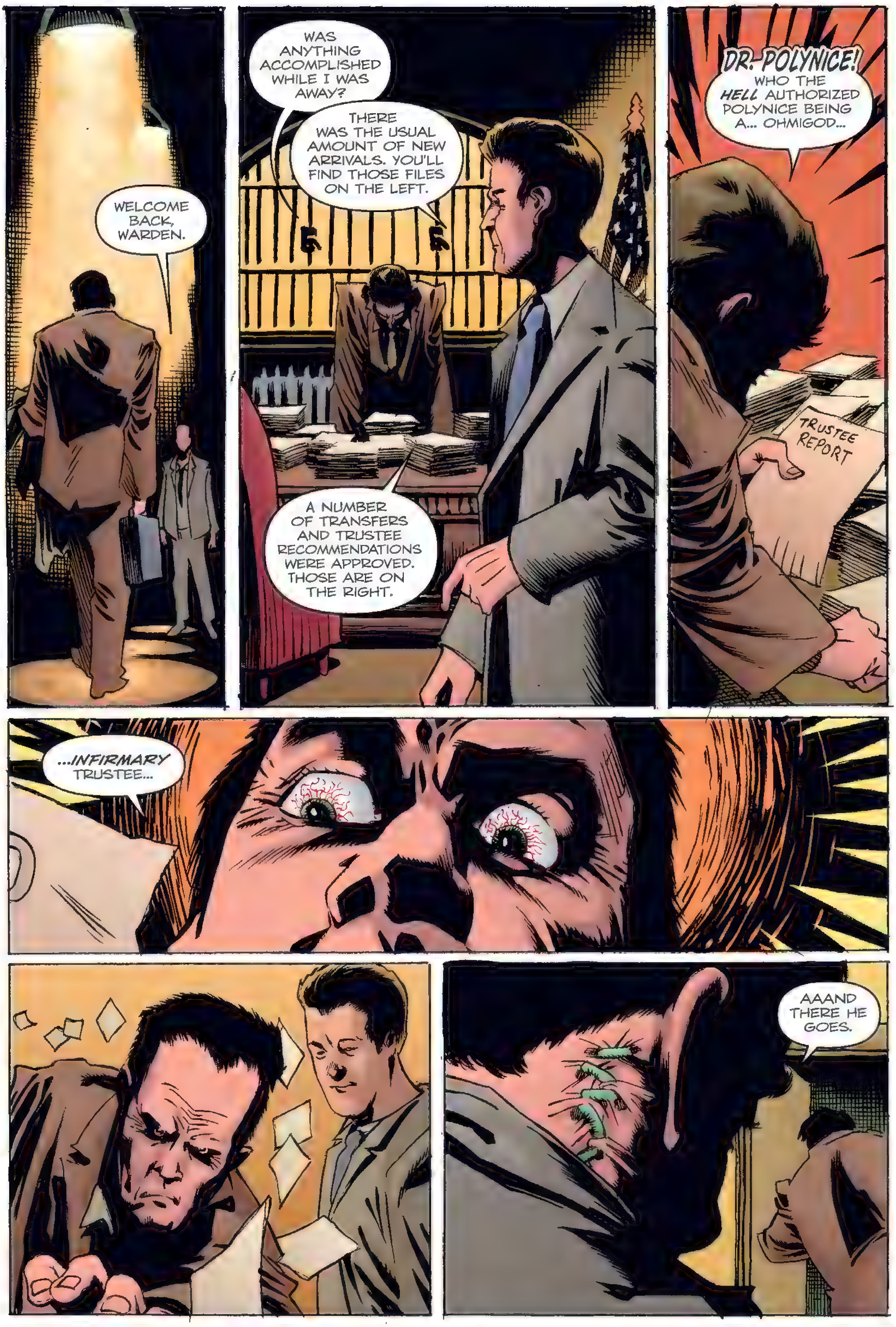
story
STEVE NILES

art
KELLEY JONES

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

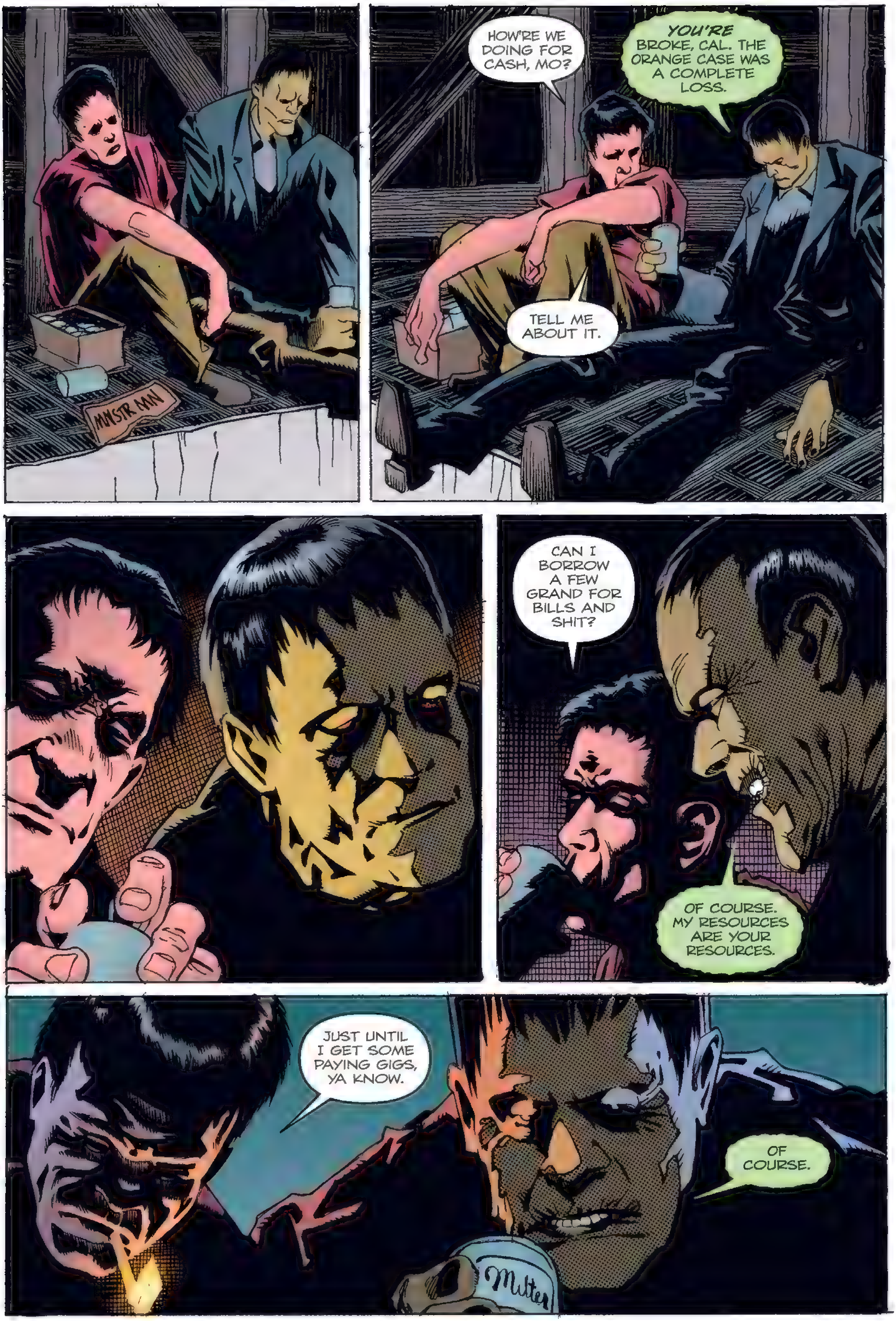
letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT® AND TOM B. LONG

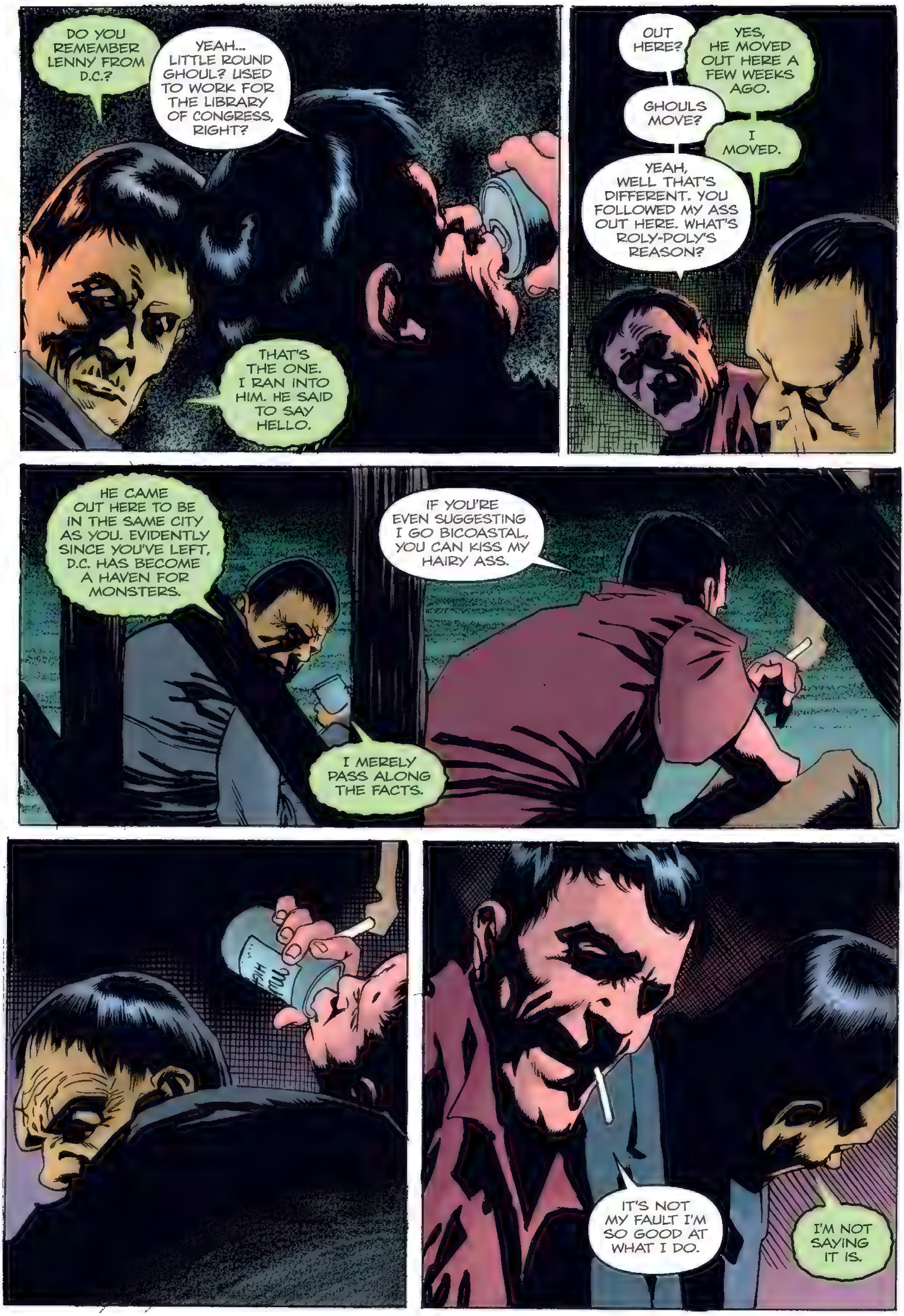
VIRGINIA MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON
WELCOME BACK, WARDEN.
HOW WAS YOUR VACATION?
AN ENTIRE WEEK OF SUN AND RELAXATION AND I'M *ALMOST* READY TO COME BACK TO THIS HELLHOLE.
YES, BUT IT'S OUR LITTLE HELLHOLE, ISN'T IT, SIR?


WELCOME BACK, WARDEN.
WAS ANYTHING ACCOMPLISHED WHILE I WAS AWAY?
THERE WAS THE USUAL AMOUNT OF NEW ARRIVALS. YOU'LL FIND THOSE FILES ON THE LEFT.
A NUMBER OF TRANSFERS AND TRUSTEE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE APPROVED. THOSE ARE ON THE RIGHT.
DR. POLYNICE! WHO THE *HELL* AUTHORIZED POLYNICE BEING A... OHMIGOD...
TRUSTEE REPORT
...*INFIRMARY* TRUSTEE...
AAAND THERE HE GOES.

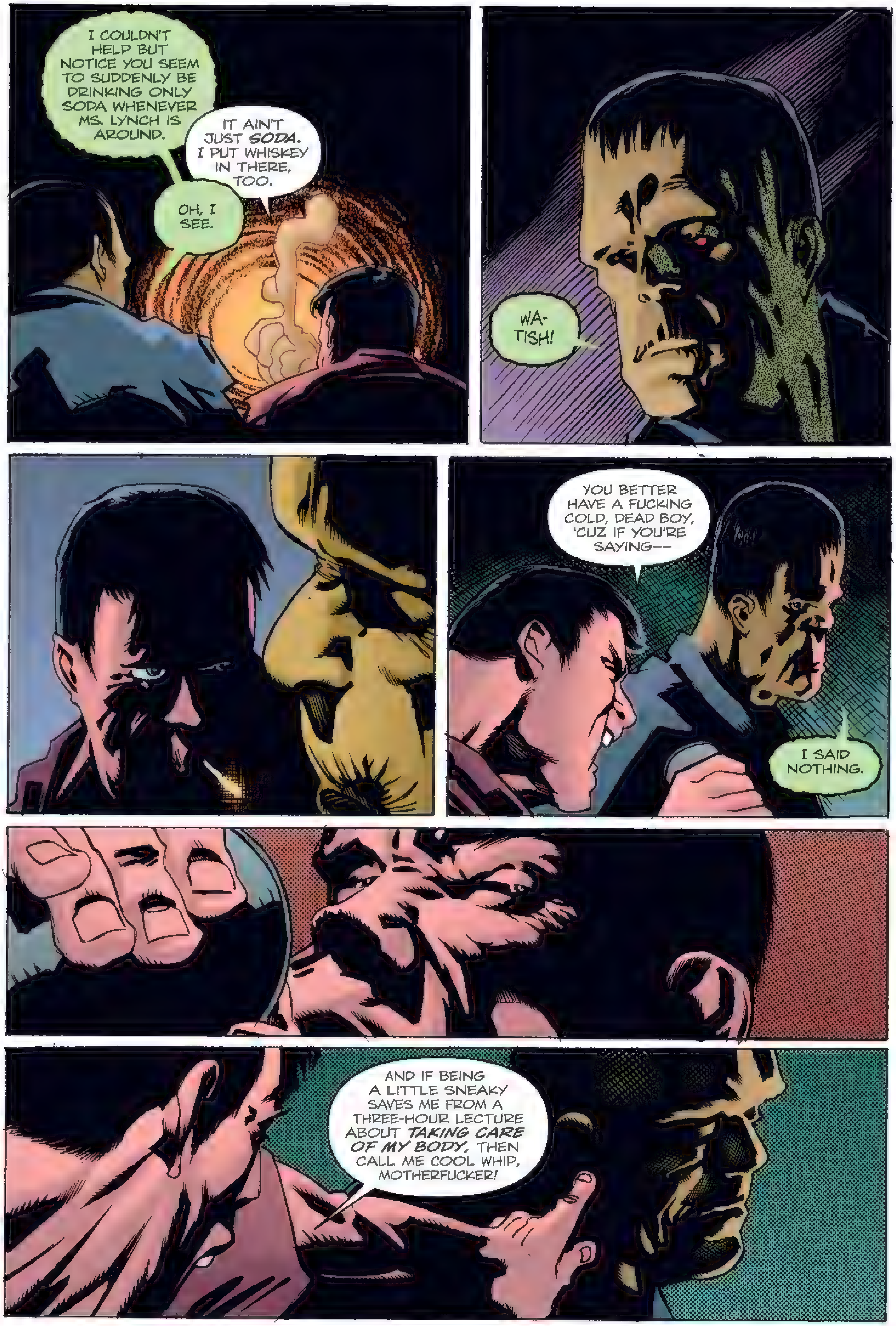
TO PRISON INFIRMARY
PRISON INFIRMARY EXIT
SWEET MAMMA-JAMMA!
WHAT IS THAT SMELL?
QUIET, YOU FUCKING ASSHOLES!
POLYNICE! IT'S WARDEN DECONNICK. ARE YOU IN THERE?!
BREAK IT OPEN!

WARDEN! I APOLOGIZE FOR THE MESS.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY.


MNSTR MN
HOW'RE WE DOING FOR CASH, MO?
YOU'RE BROKE, CAL. THE ORANGE CASE WAS A COMPLETE LOSS.
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
CAN I BORROW A FEW GRAND FOR BILLS AND SHIT?
OF COURSE. MY RESOURCES ARE YOUR RESOURCES.
JUST UNTIL I GET SOME PAYING GIGS, YA KNOW.
OF COURSE.
Miller


DO YOU REMEMBER LENNY FROM D.C.?
YEAH... LITTLE ROUND GHOUL? USED TO WORK FOR THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, RIGHT?
THAT'S THE ONE. I RAN INTO HIM. HE SAID TO SAY HELLO.
OUT HERE?
YES, HE MOVED OUT HERE A FEW WEEKS AGO.
GHOULS MOVE?
I MOVED.
YEAH, WELL THAT'S DIFFERENT. YOU FOLLOWED MY ASS OUT HERE. WHAT'S ROLY-POLY'S REASON?
HE CAME OUT HERE TO BE IN THE SAME CITY AS YOU. EVIDENTLY SINCE YOU'VE LEFT, D.C. HAS BECOME A HAVEN FOR MONSTERS.
IF YOU'RE EVEN SUGGESTING I GO BICOASTAL, YOU CAN KISS MY HAIRY ASS.
I MERELY PASS ALONG THE FACTS.
IT'S NOT MY FAULT I'M SO GOOD AT WHAT I DO.
I'M NOT SAYING IT IS.

I MEAN, NOT EVERYBODY CAN BE AS SMART, CHARMING, AND--
BLARRRRRGH!
SHIT.
YES, IT WOULD BE HARD TO FIND OTHERS WITH YOUR CHARISMA, CAL.
SHUT UP, MO'LOCK!
SMOKE?
NO... THANK YOU.
COME ON! YOU NEVER JOIN ME FOR ANYTHING. HAVE ONE DAMN SMOKE. IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL KILL YOU.
TO STEAL A PHRASE FROM YOU... THEY SMELL LIKE ASS.
WHAT ABOUT CLOVE CIGARETTES?
SPICY ASS.


I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU SEEM TO SUDDENLY BE DRINKING ONLY SODA WHENEVER MS. LYNCH IS AROUND.
IT AIN'T JUST **SODA**. I PUT WHISKEY IN THERE, TOO.
OH, I SEE.
WA-TISH!
YOU BETTER HAVE A FUCKING COLD, DEAD BOY, 'CUZ IF YOU'RE SAYING--
I SAID NOTHING.
AND IF BEING A LITTLE SNEAKY SAVES ME FROM A THREE-HOUR LECTURE ABOUT *TAKING CARE OF MY BODY,* THEN CALL ME COOL WHIP, MOTHERFUCKER!

YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS, DEAD BOY? YOU GOT A BAD ATTITUDE.
COMING FROM YOU, CAL, I CONSIDER THAT A COMPLIMENT.
HOLLYWOOD

COME ON. JUST ONE?
YOU ARE DRUNK.
ACTUALLY, I'M MORE STONED AT THE MOMENT.
PERHAPS JUST THIS ONCE.
YIKES.
OKAY, THAT'S DISGUSTING. PLEASE STOP.
BUT IT'S SO REFRESHING.

MOCKING ASIDE, A WOMAN WHO RAMS A HIGHER DEMON WITH YOUR CAR IS NOT SOMEONE TO BE OVERLOOKED.
YEAH, I KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I HIDE THE HOOCH.
I NEED A CAR.
I KNOW A PLACE ON OLIVE THAT SELLS SOME NICE OLD RODS.
THEN WE START THERE.
I WILL NEED TO STOP AT AN A.T.M. ON THE WAY.
SURE. WHATEVER.

GYWNN USED CARS
TAXI
17999^{00}
TAXI
12999^{00}
THANKS FOR THE RIDE, FRANK.
THERE IS A GREAT EVIL NEAR, CAL McDONALD. BEWARE.
FRANK FRYE
YEAH, THANKS. YOU HAVE A GREAT EVENING, TOO...
...FUCKING *FREAK*.
CROSS POL
POLICE DO NO
NOTE TO CUSTOMERS DUE TO RUSTY'S UNTIMELY DEATH, THE LOT WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
JUST MY LUCK.
INDEED, HOW UNFORTUNATE A MAN HAD TO GO AND DIE WHEN YOU NEEDED A CAR.
YOU'RE REALLY GROWING A LIP ON YOU. ONE OF THESE-- HEY, LOOK UP THERE.

HEY, *YO, DUDES!* UP HERE!
WHAT THE HELL?
COME ON UP! THERE'S A LADDER AROUND THE SIDE!
WELL, I'M CURIOUS.
WHAT IS THAT SMELL?
PARDON.
YOU'RE THAT GUY, AREN'T YOU?!
I DON'T --ERK!
I SEEN YOU IN THAT MAGAZINE.
MAGAZINE?

HELL YEAH! YOU'RE THE DUDE. CAL McDOUGAL, RIGHT?
McDONALD.
SORRY. I'M *BIG PETE.*
COME ON, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. BOY, AM I GLAD YOU CAME ALONG!
THAT MAKES ONE OF US.
COLEMAN
TATTOO
I GOT THE LATEST ISSUE AND THERE YOU WERE!
SPECULATOR MAGAZINE
NICE PIC.
SO, AH, WHAT'S THE DEAL, BIG PETE? LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE LIVING ON THE ROOF OF THE GARAGE HERE?
WELL... YEAH... YA SEE... WHO'S THAT GUY?
HIM? DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM. HE'S UNDEAD, BUT HE WON'T BITE YOU OR NOTHING. I GUESS YOU COULD CALL HIM THE POLITE DEAD.
D... DEAD?
LIKE YOU'RE GONNA BE IF YOU DON'T TELL US WHY YOU DRAGGED US UP HERE. I CAME LOOKING FOR A CAR, NOT A SOB STORY.

I'M UP HERE HIDING 'CUZ RUSTY GOT RUN DOWN AND ALL MY BUDDIES ARE TURNING UP *MURDERED.*
AND I THINK THEY WERE KILLED BY... A CAR.
YOUR BUDDIES NEVER HEARD OF A CROSSWALK?
NOT RUN OVER LIKE THAT! I'M SAYING IT WAS *THE CAR* THAT KILLED THEM, A 1973 GUN-METAL-GRAY CHEVY NOVA SUPER SPORT, AND NOW IT'S AFTER *ME!*
CAN'T. BREATHE. MO. KILL. HIM.
YOU ARE SAYING A DRIVERLESS CAR IS KILLING PEOPLE.
YEAH, THAZ EXACTLY WHAT I'M SAYING. YOU EVER HEARD OF ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE?
THERE *HAVE* BEEN SEVERAL CASES...
GASP! GAG!

OOOH!
FUCKING CHOKE ME, YOU FAT FUCK!
CAL, PLEASE! HE NEEDS OUR AID! THIS IS NOT HELPING!
LOOK.
DAMN...
...IT'S THE *NOVA.*

OHMIGOD! THERE IT IS. IT'S LOOKING FOR ME!
I DON'T SEE A DRIVER.
THE GENTLEMAN SEEMS TO BELIEVE THE CAR IS KILLING ON ITS OWN.
IT'S CIRCLING THE BUILDING. WEIRD.
MAYBE YOU BETTER TELL US EVERYTHING, BIG BOY. HOW'D THIS CAR COME TO WANT TO KILL YOU AND ALL YER BUDS?
A COUPLE YEARS AGO... ME, RUSTY, LITTLE PETE, AND THIS GUY NAMED SPIVEY WERE GETTING DRUNK AND FIXING UP THAT NOVA DOWN THERE--
WAIT, WHO'S LITTLE PETE?
HE'S DEAD.
ONE OF THE--
YEAH.
SORRY.
WE WERE FIXING HER UP FOR THAT GUY, SPIVEY. WE WERE ALL DRUNK AND I GUESS WE LEFT HIM IN THE GARAGE...
HE WAS IN THE NOVA WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING. HE MUSTA PASSED OUT. WHEN WE CAME BACK, HE WAS DEAD.

OKAY, SOUNDS LIKE WE HAVE A VENGEFUL SPIRIT RUNNING AROUND INSIDE THAT CAR. I'LL CHECK IT OUT FOR YOU.
AND THIS AIN'T FOR FREE. I GET RID OF THIS, YOU OWE ME FOR MY TIME, GOT IT?
YEAH, YEAH. SURE.
GOOD, BECAUSE I ALWAYS FORGET TO SAY THAT.

SMART CAR.
YOUR MOVE, FUCKO.

WANNA KNOW WHAT I LEARNED TODAY?
IF YOU FIND SOMETHING IN YOUR POCKET AND YOU'RE NOT SURE IF IT'S AN ASPIRIN OR ACID, ASSUME THE WORST AND DON'T EAT IT.
IF YOU *DO* EAT IT, THOUGH, MAKE SURE IT'S GOOD *AND* STAY HOME...
AND IF YOU DON'T STAY HOME, EAT THE ACID, AND DISCOVER IT'S BAD...

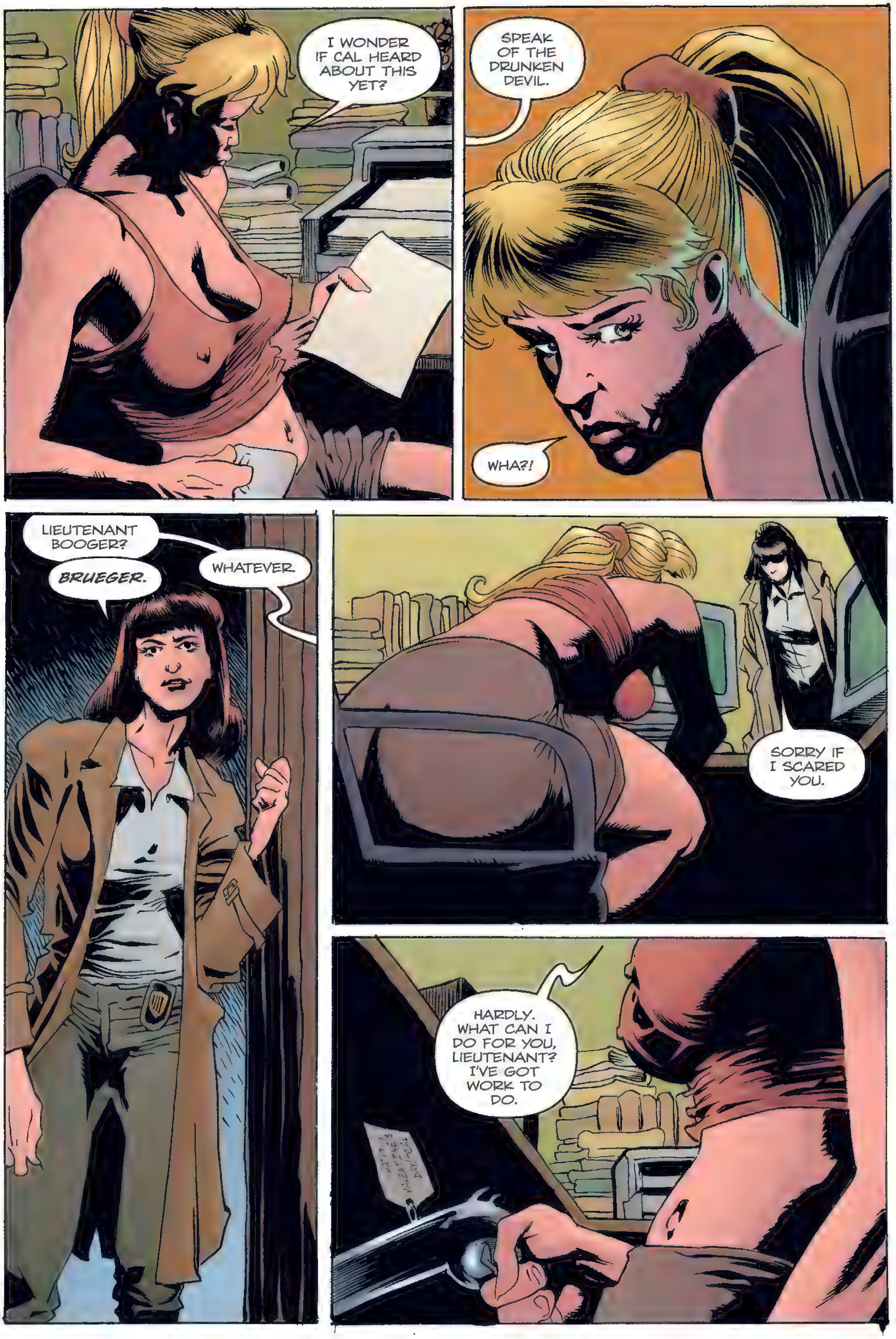
...DON'T TRY
TO TAKE ON A
POSSESSED
'73 CHEVY NOVA.
SS

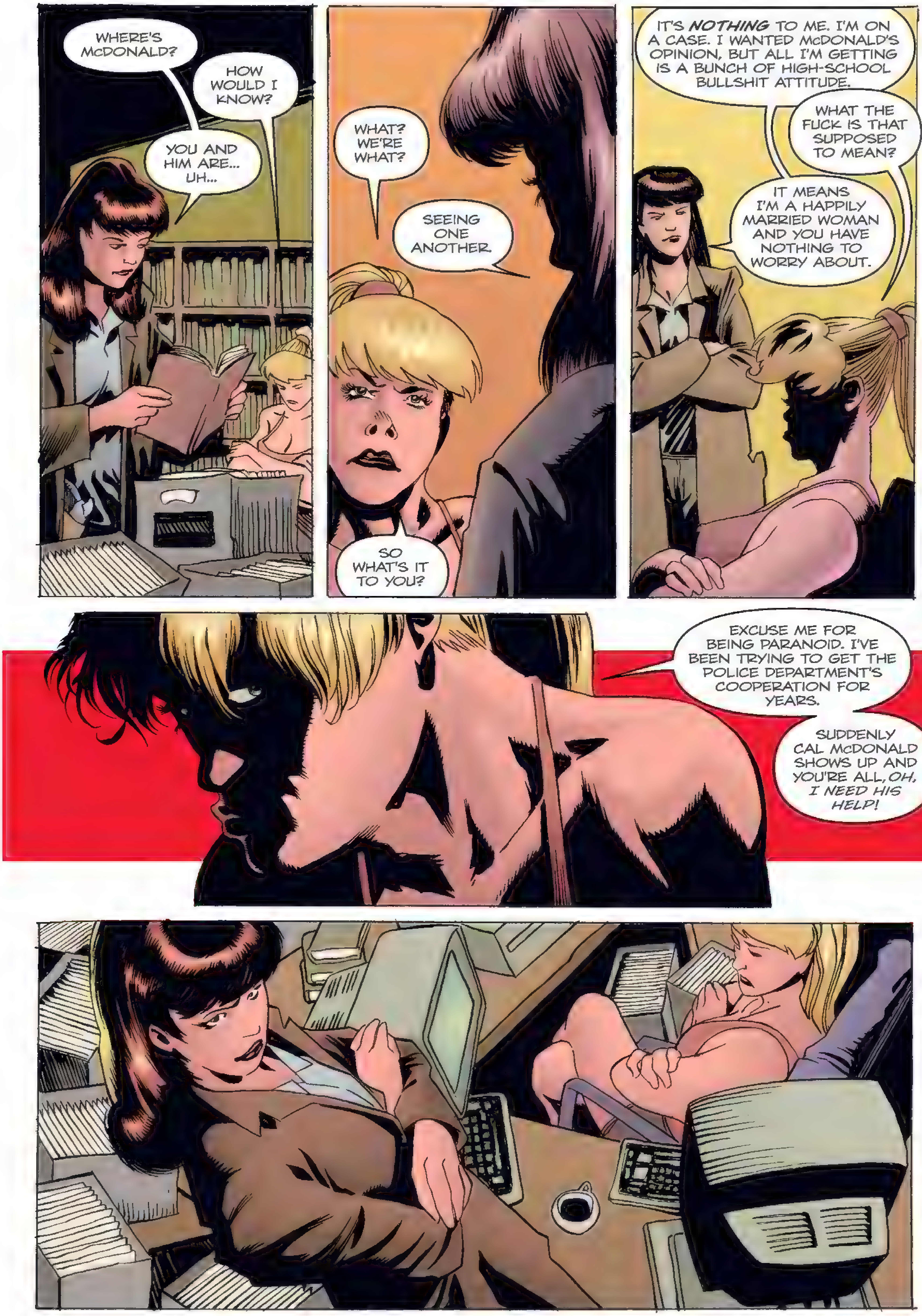
HA!
NOW I HAVE YOU!
WHY'S HE GETTING IN THE CAR? HE'S DEAD FOR SURE NOW.
ACTUALLY, IT WAS RATHER CLEVER OF MY HAZY-BRAINED FRIEND.
THE CAR SEEMS TO POSSESS THE INSTINCT YOU CALL SELF-PRESERVATION. IT AVOIDED THE BULLET.
IT WON'T DAMAGE ITSELF TO INJURE CAL... MOST LIKELY.

OKAY, CAR? DEAD GUY HAUNTING CAR? WHATEVER. I'M JUST HERE TO HELP.
GAH!
SMASH
IT'S GONNA BE LIKE THAT, HUH?
WE SHOULD HELP YOUR FRIEND, SHOULDN'T WE?
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?

I'M NOT SURE GETTING IN THE CAR WAS SUCH A GOOD IDEA...
...IT COULD CUT OFF ALL HIS AIR AND PUMP TOXIC SHIT IN THERE.
THE CAR STOPPED.

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
YOU SAID YOU'D HAVE IT WRITTEN BY TODAY. THE ISSUE'S GOING OUT TONIGHT!
WHAT? YEAH, I KNOW. YIKES.
THAT'S ALL TERRIBLE AND I'M REALLY SORRY, TODD, BUT I NEED TWELVE THOUSAND WORDS ON MODERN VOODOO, NOT TWELVE THOUSAND EXCUSES!
FUCKING GREAT. TIME FOR ANOTHER WEIRD NEWS FLUFF PIECE.
YOOHOO NEWS
Bizarre Prison Escape
MASSACRE IN MARYLAND
HUH?
THAT'S WHERE DR. POLYNICE IS LOCKED UP.


I WONDER IF CAL HEARD ABOUT THIS YET?
SPEAK OF THE DRUNKEN DEVIL.
WHA?!
LIEUTENANT BOOGER?
BRUEGER.
WHATEVER.
SORRY IF I SCARED YOU.
HARDLY. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, LIEUTENANT? I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.
HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY—CAL


WHERE'S McDONALD?
HOW WOULD I KNOW?
YOU AND HIM ARE... UH...
WHAT? WE'RE WHAT?
SEEING ONE ANOTHER.
SO WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
IT'S *NOTHING* TO ME. I'M ON A CASE. I WANTED McDONALD'S OPINION, BUT ALL I'M GETTING IS A BUNCH OF HIGH-SCHOOL BULLSHIT ATTITUDE.
WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT MEANS I'M A HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN AND YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
EXCUSE ME FOR BEING PARANOID. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S COOPERATION FOR YEARS.
SUDDENLY CAL McDONALD SHOWS UP AND YOU'RE ALL, *OH, I NEED HIS HELP!*

CAN WE START OVER? I REALLY DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE THIS.
YEAH. OKAY.
SO... ANY IDEA WHERE THAT WALKING PHARMACY IS?
I WISH I DID. I JUST READ SOMETHING HE SHOULD KNOW.
HE'S TRYING TO STAY SOBER AROUND ME... SO I DON'T SEE HIM MUCH AS A RESULT.

I'M SORRY... BUT IT'S FUNNY.
YEAH, IT'S A RIOT.
WELL, IF HE STUMBLES BY HERE CAN YOU TELL HIM THERE WAS A PRISON BREAK--
--IN MARYLAND, WHERE DR. POLYNICE WAS PUT AWAY... WHERE CAL *PUT HIM AWAY.*
I REMEMBERED HE MENTIONED THE NAME. THE DESCRIPTION IN THE PAPER DOESN'T SAY IT BUT--
--IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE NOT TELLING THE WHOLE STORY?
POLYNICE IS WELL KNOWN AS A MODERN-DAY JOSEF MENGELE WITH A VOODOO TWIST. LAST TIME CAL RAN INTO HIM, HE WAS TRYING TO KILL HIM.
THAT WAS THE PART HE TOLD ME. THE PAPERS DIDN'T SAY SO, BUT POLYNICE *DID* ESCAPE, SO I THOUGHT I SHOULD WARN HIM.
WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO WHERE WE STARTED.
AND STILL NO CLUE WHAT THAT RETARD IS DOING.

GAAAAAH-GAAAAH!
TRYING... -COUGH- TO KILL ME!
HA!
BLAMM
SKREEEEEEEEEEEEE

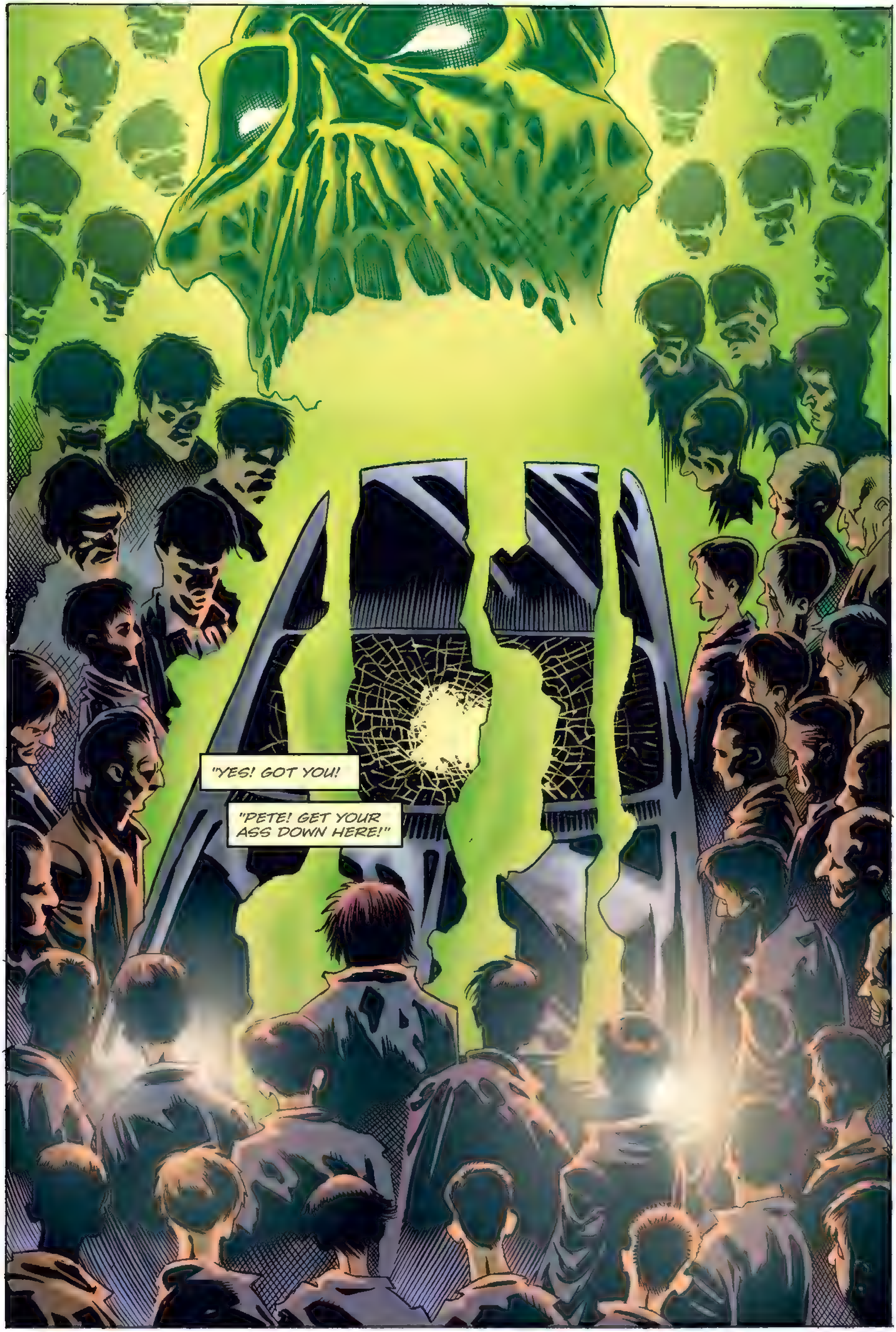
SS
SS
SONOFABITCH.
THE POWER OF CHRIST COMPELS YOU——
VRRROOOOOOOM

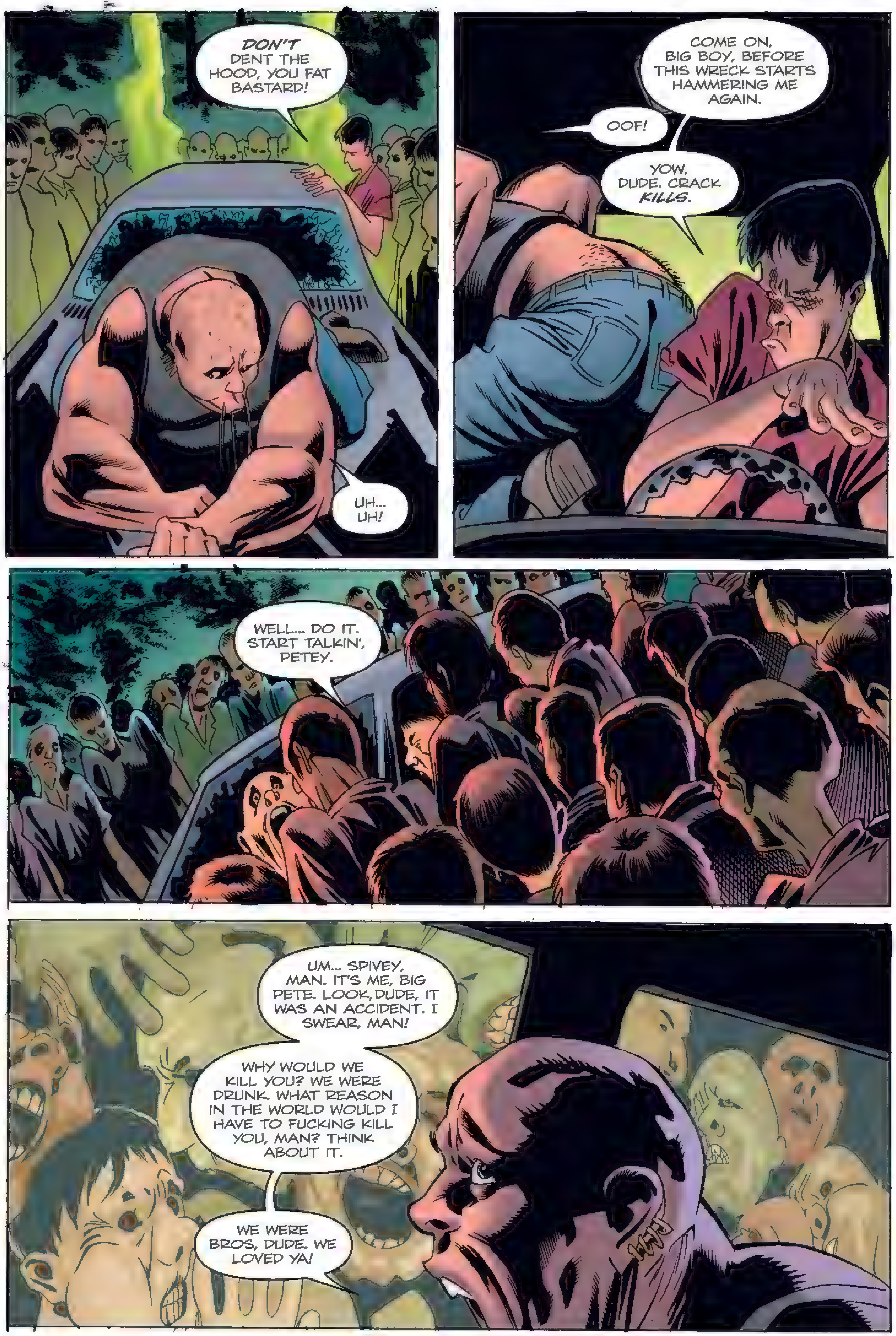
MO'LOOOOOOCK!
COMING!
I WANNA GO TO THE HOSPITAL.
GOTCHA!
VRRROOOOOOM
WHOA... I'M FLYING.
WE'RE STUCK UP HERE FOREVER, AREN'T WE?
SIR, PLEASE.
I LIKE THAT CAR. I REALLY DO.
YOU'RE DELIRIOUS.

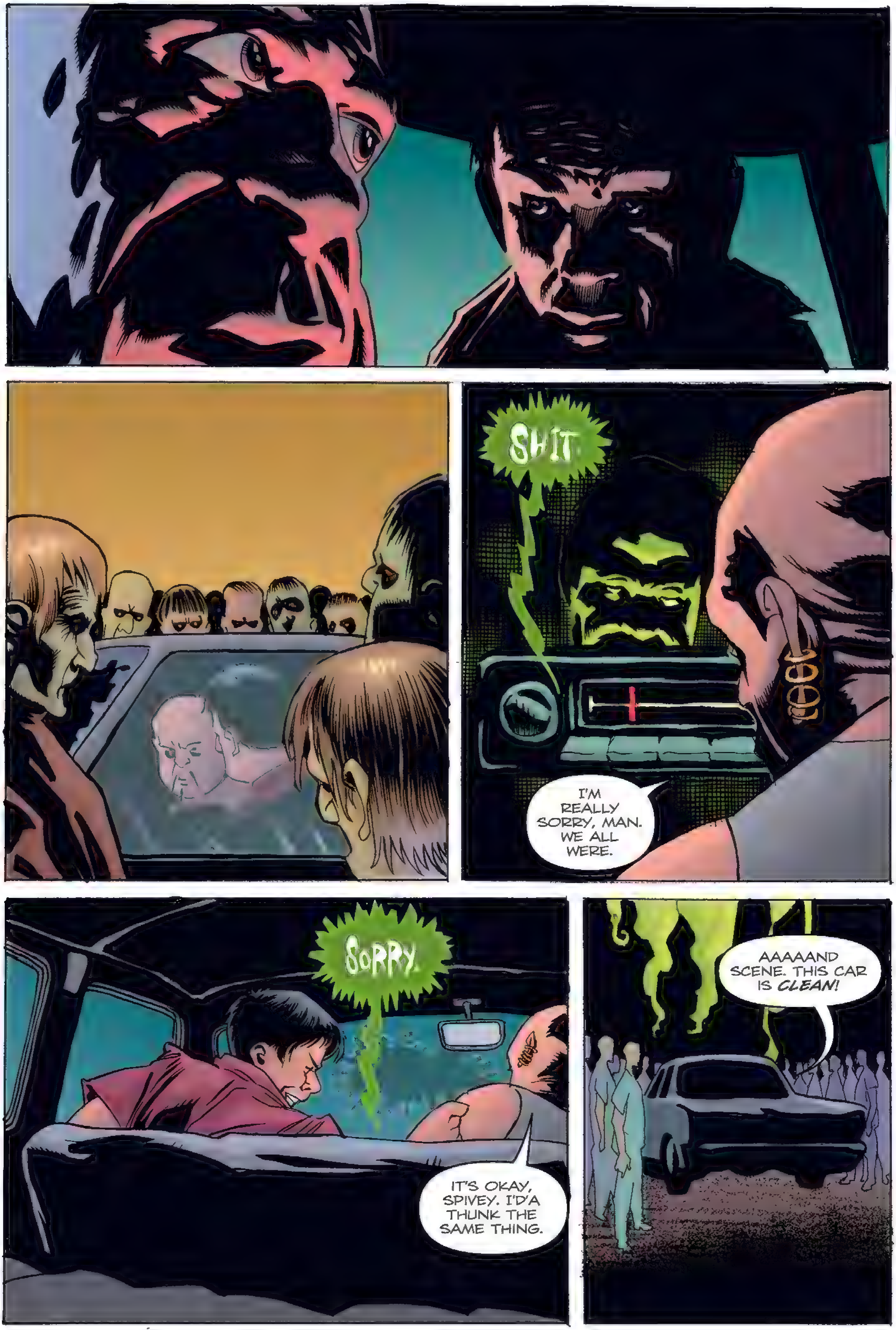
I'M SOAKED!
SQUISHY. SQUISHY. SQUISHY.
YOU HAVE A MASSIVE HEAD WOUND. CAL! MY SHIRT.
YOU GUYS OKAY? WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO?
I CAN HEAR THE OCEAN IN MY EARS. WANNA HEAR?
FORGIVE MY FRIEND... HE IS INTOXICATED AND IN SHOCK.
WHOOSH!
OKAY. OW. HEAD SPINNING. FINE NOW. LET'S FIGURE THIS FUCK OUT.
BIG BOY, DOES THE GUY WHO DIED IN THE CAR--
SPIVEY.
SPIVEY. DOES HE *KNOW* IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT*? YOU GUYS FORGETTING ABOUT HIM?
I DON'T KNOW. CAN'T HE SEE DOWN FROM FUCKIN' HEAVEN AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED?

SINCE HIS SPIRIT IS IN THAT CAR AND HE'S MOWING DOWN ALL YOUR BUDDIES, I'D SAY HE AIN'T SEEING MUCH.
HE IS A LOST SOUL TRAPPED WITHIN THE LAST HIDEOUS MOMENT OF HIS LIFE.
WE COULD TRY TRAPPING IT, SHOOTING ITS TIRES OUT.
THAT'S WHAT GOT LITTLE PETE KILLED. HE TRIED SHOOTING OUT THE TIRES. CAR SWERVED AND DRAGGED HIM TILL HE TORE INTO FOUR OR FIVE PIECES.
YOU THINK YOU CAN ROUND UP ABOUT SEVENTY-FIVE TO A HUNDRED OF YOUR BUDDIES?
INTERESTING. YES, I THINK I CAN DO THAT.
WHO'S HE CALLING?
TRUST ME. YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
SURE I DO.
DEAD PEOPLE, OKAY? HE'S CALLING DEAD PEOPLE.
IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE, BROTHER LUTHER. USE THE SHADOWS. PLEASE PASS THE WORD.
AND TELL 'EM TO MAKE IT SNAPPY. THIS AIN'T NO TIME FOR LUMBERING AROUND LIKE A ZOMBIE.

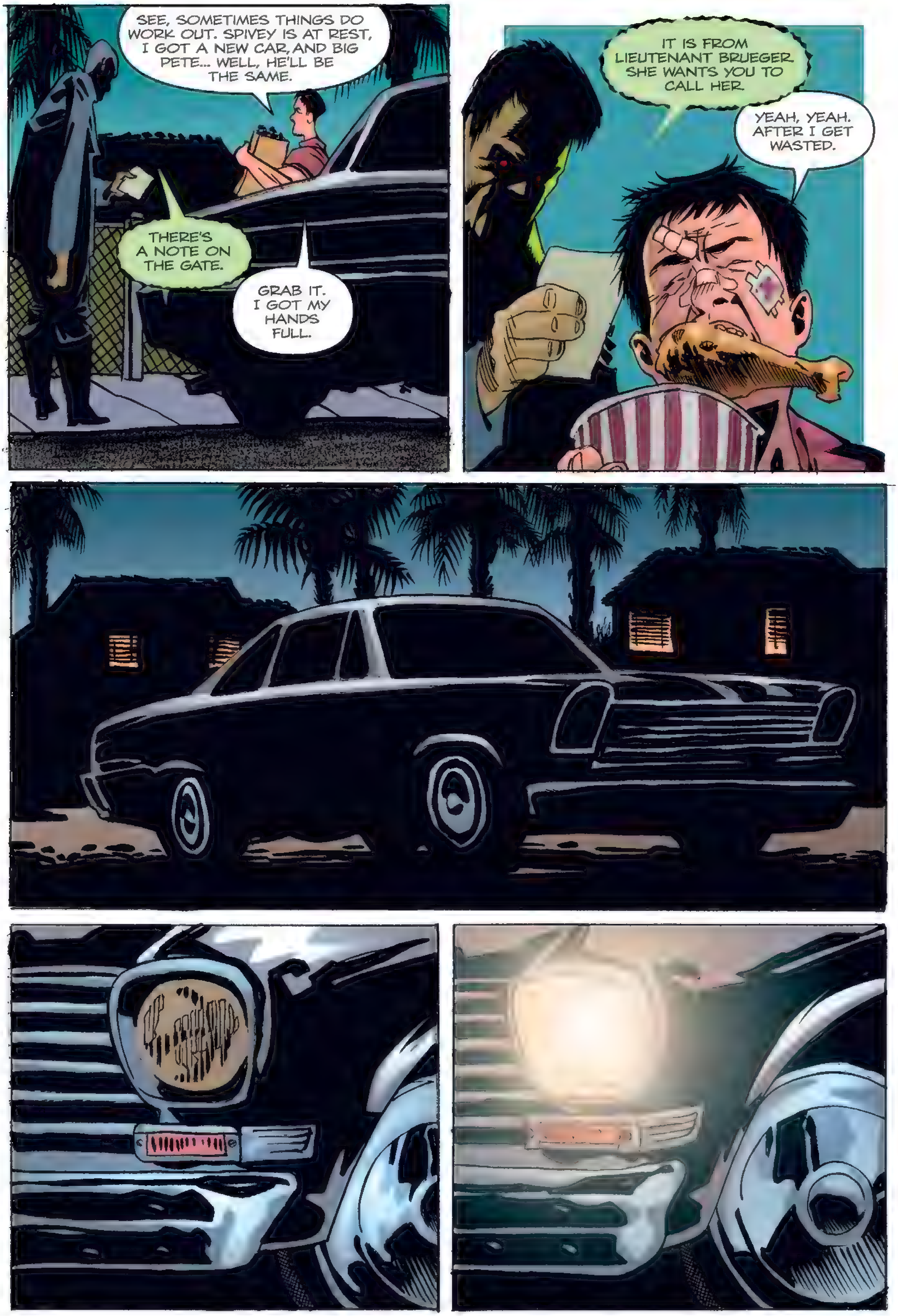
A BIT LATER.
THIS BETTER WORK.
UM... GUYS... THE CAR IS GONE.
CAR? *HELLOOO, CAR?* YOU THERE, CAR?
SHIT.
NOWWWWWWWW!

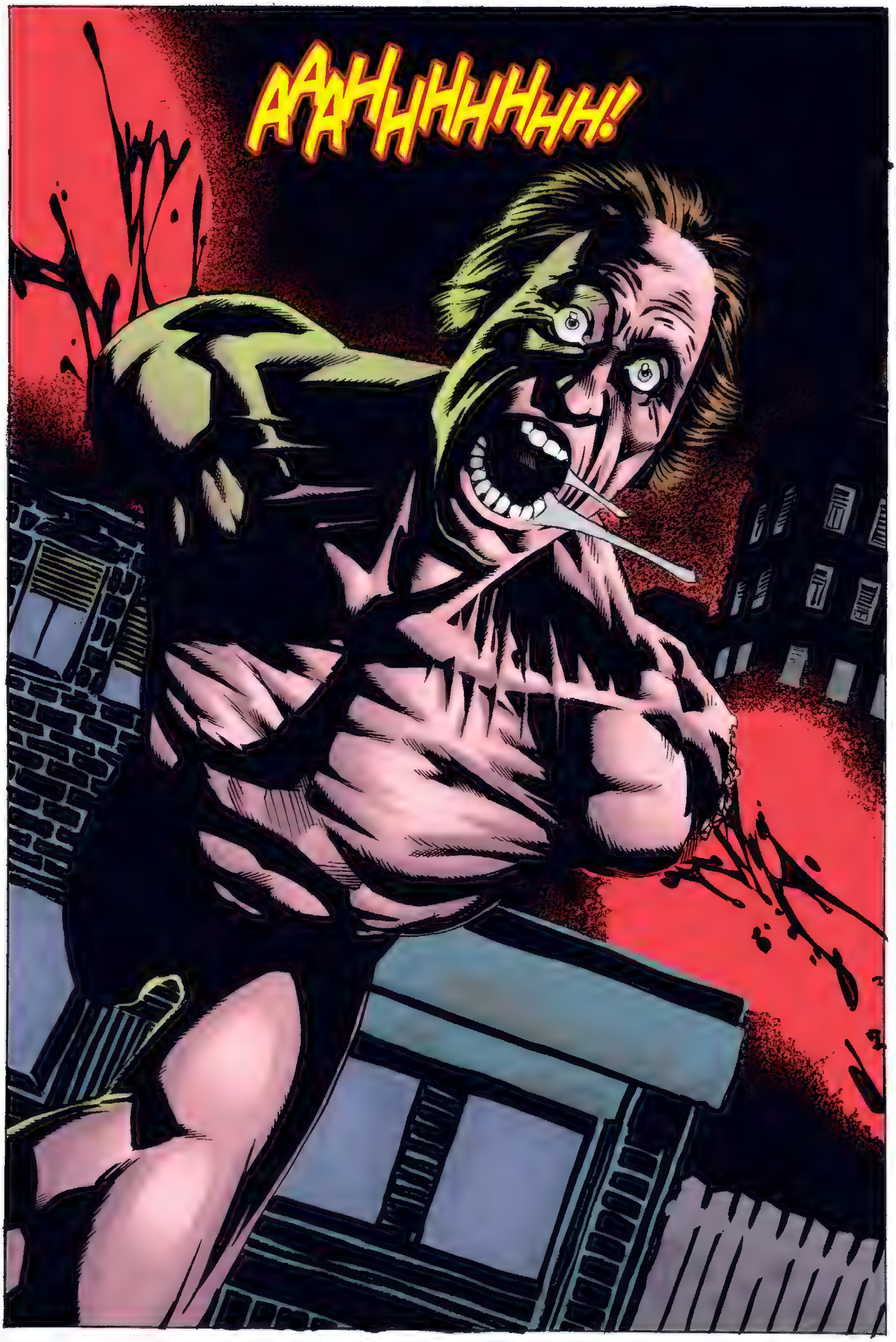

"YES! GOT YOU!
"PETE! GET YOUR ASS DOWN HERE!"


DON'T DENT THE HOOD, YOU FAT BASTARD!
UH... UH!
COME ON, BIG BOY, BEFORE THIS WRECK STARTS HAMMERING ME AGAIN.
OOF!
YOW, DUDE. CRACK KILLS.
WELL... DO IT. START TALKIN', PETEY.
UM... SPIVEY, MAN. IT'S ME, BIG PETE. LOOK, DUDE, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. I SWEAR, MAN!
WHY WOULD WE KILL YOU? WE WERE DRUNK. WHAT REASON IN THE WORLD WOULD I HAVE TO FUCKING KILL YOU, MAN? THINK ABOUT IT.
WE WERE BROS, DUDE. WE LOVED YA!

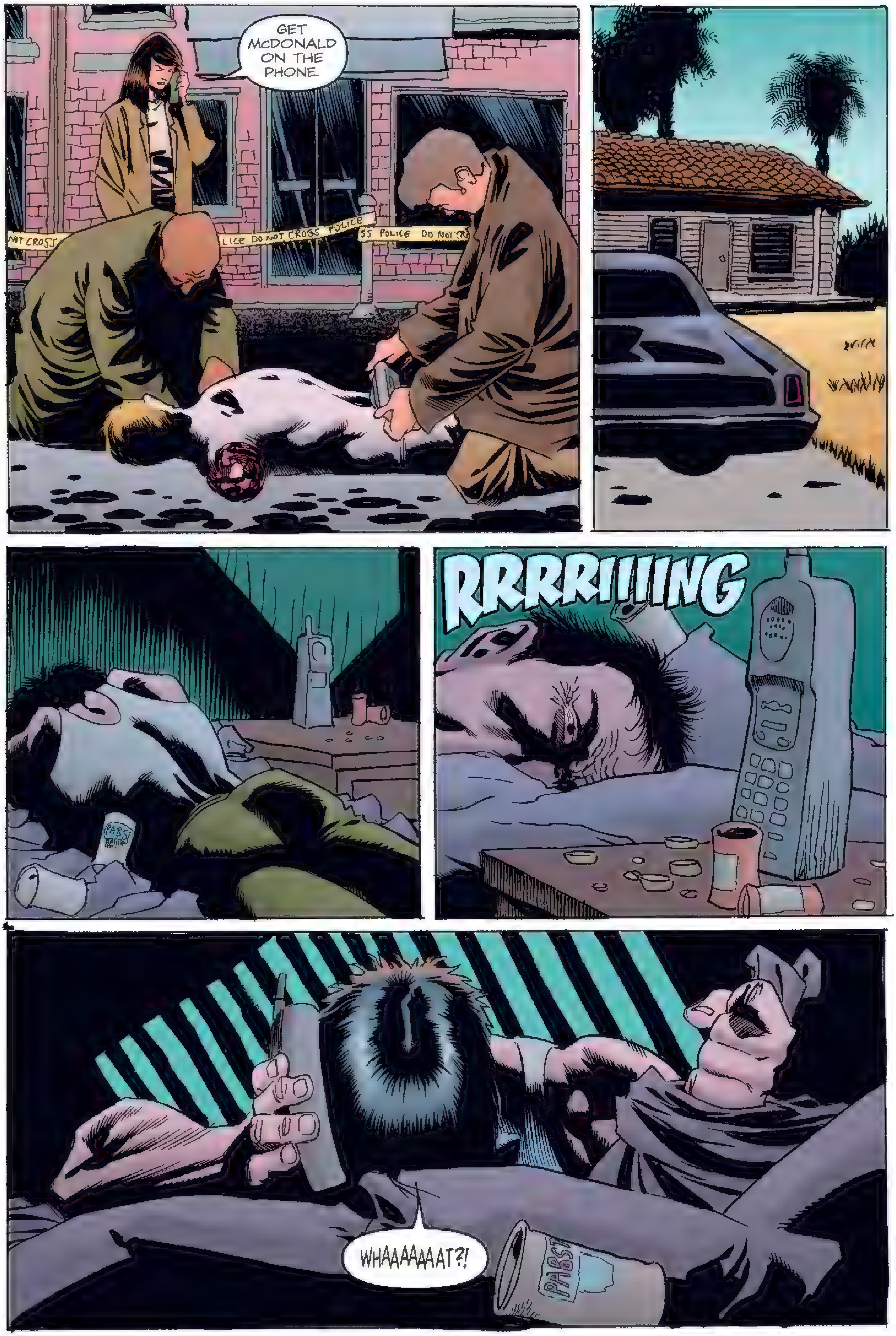

SHIT
I'M REALLY SORRY, MAN. WE ALL WERE.
SORRY.
IT'S OKAY, SPIVEY. I'D'A THUNK THE SAME THING.
AAAAAND SCENE. THIS CAR IS *CLEAN!*

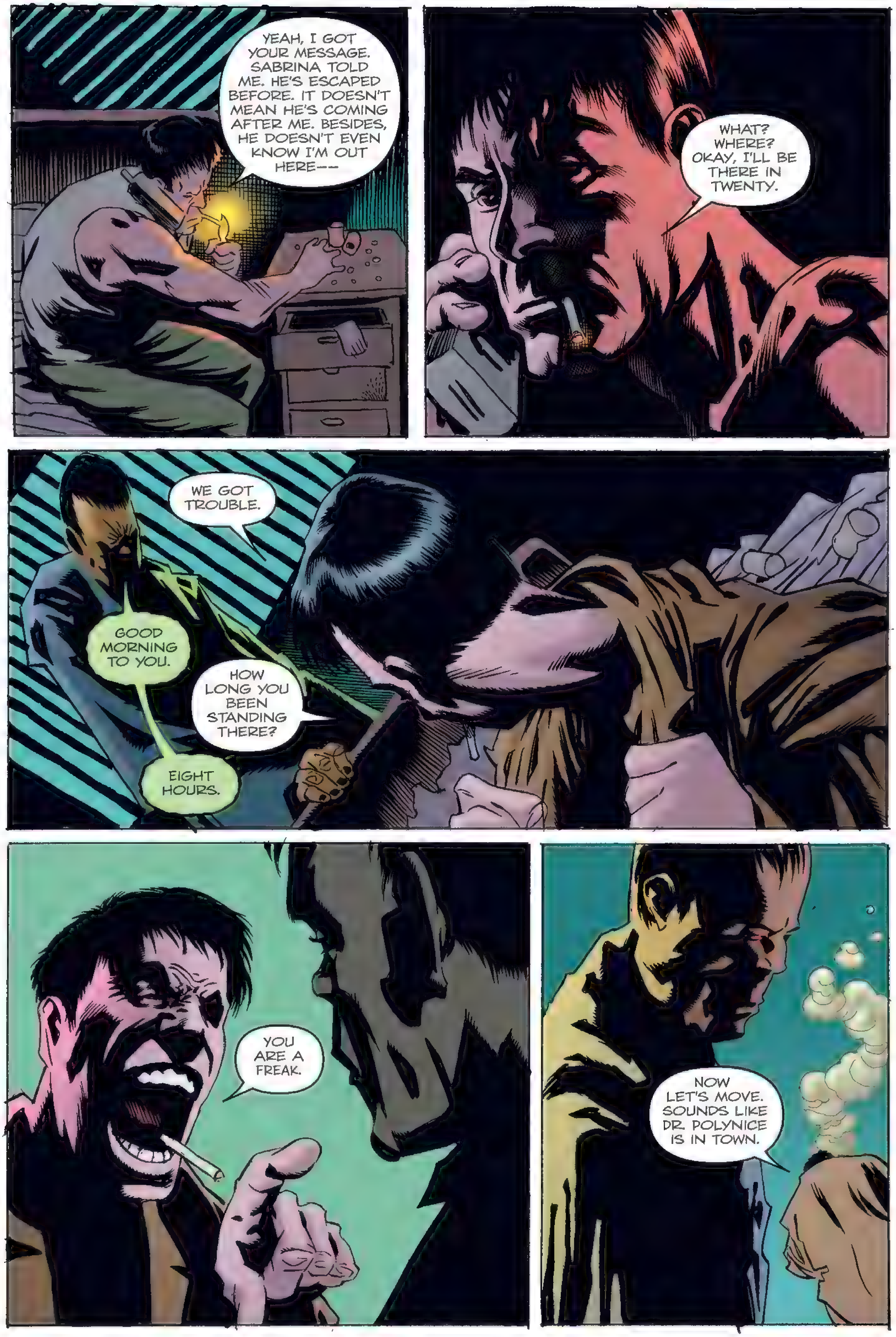
THANKS, CHESTER. APPRECIATE THE HAND.
NIGHT CLERK
OUR PLEASURE, CAL McDONALD.
SEE IF THE KEYS ARE IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT.
LET'S TALK ABOUT PAYMENT FOR MY SERVICES.
HOW MUCH?
I'LL TAKE THE CAR.
DEAL.
NICE.
REMINDS ME OF BEING A KID, EXCEPT I'M NOT STARING AT MY FEET.

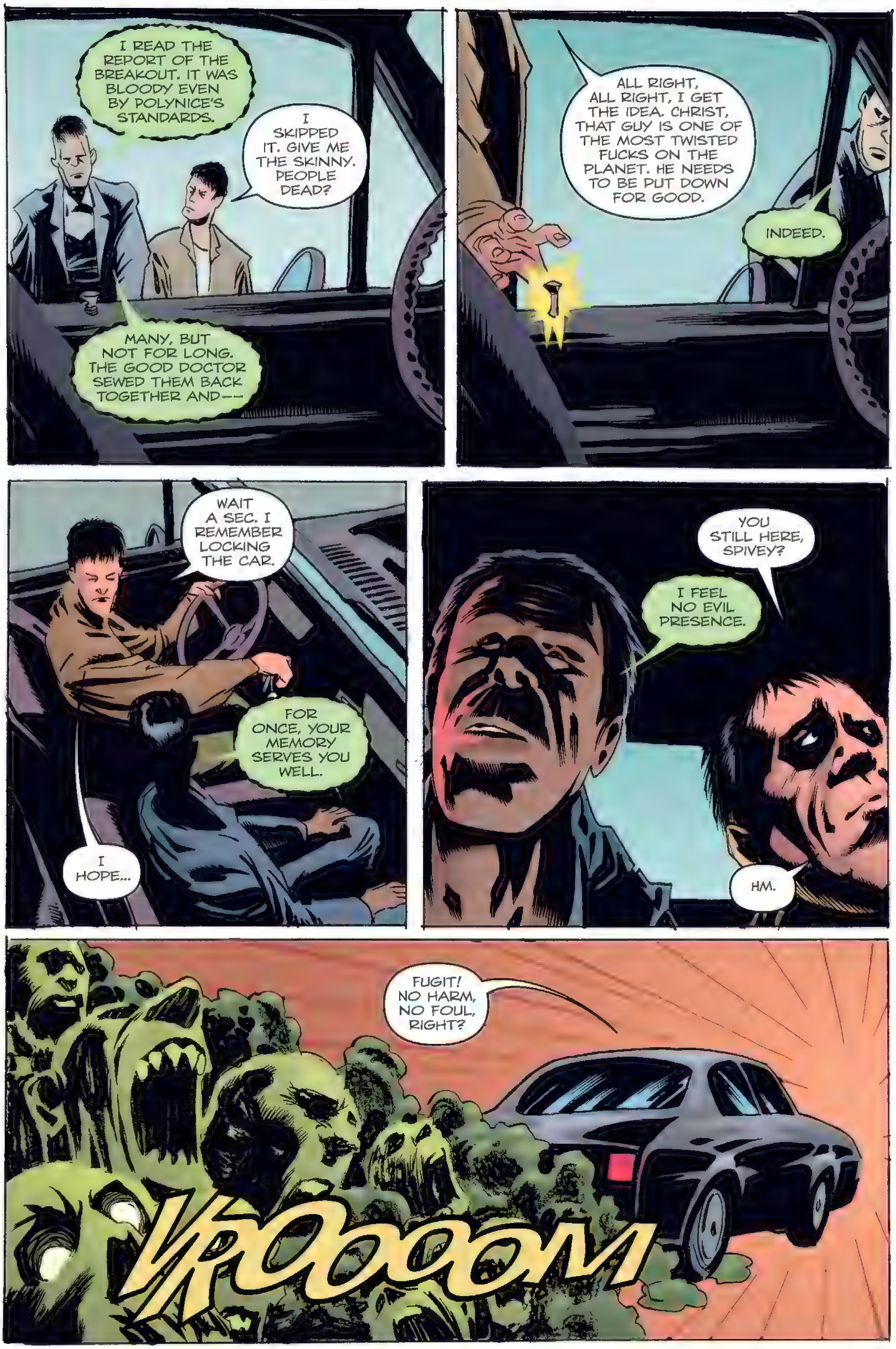

SEE, SOMETIMES THINGS DO WORK OUT. SPIVEY IS AT REST, I GOT A NEW CAR, AND BIG PETE... WELL, HE'LL BE THE SAME.
THERE'S A NOTE ON THE GATE.
GRAB IT. I GOT MY HANDS FULL.
IT IS FROM LIEUTENANT BRUEGER. SHE WANTS YOU TO CALL HER.
YEAH, YEAH. AFTER I GET WASTED.


AAAHHHHHHH!

URK.


GET McDONALD ON THE PHONE.
NOT CROSS
LICE DO NOT CROSS POLICE
SS POLICE DO NOT CR
PABST
RRRRIIIING
WHAAAAAAAT?!
PABST


YEAH, I GOT YOUR MESSAGE. SABRINA TOLD ME. HE'S ESCAPED BEFORE. IT DOESN'T MEAN HE'S COMING AFTER ME. BESIDES, HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I'M OUT HERE---
WHAT? WHERE? OKAY, I'LL BE THERE IN TWENTY.
WE GOT TROUBLE.
GOOD MORNING TO YOU.
HOW LONG YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?
EIGHT HOURS.
YOU ARE A FREAK.
NOW LET'S MOVE. SOUNDS LIKE DR. POLYNICE IS IN TOWN.


I READ THE REPORT OF THE BREAKOUT. IT WAS BLOODY EVEN BY POLYNICE'S STANDARDS.
I SKIPPED IT. GIVE ME THE SKINNY. PEOPLE DEAD?
MANY, BUT NOT FOR LONG. THE GOOD DOCTOR SEWED THEM BACK TOGETHER AND--
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, I GET THE IDEA. CHRIST, THAT GUY IS ONE OF THE MOST TWISTED FUCKS ON THE PLANET. HE NEEDS TO BE PUT DOWN FOR GOOD.
INDEED.
WAIT A SEC. I REMEMBER LOCKING THE CAR.
FOR ONCE, YOUR MEMORY SERVES YOU WELL.
I HOPE...
YOU STILL HERE, SPIVEY?
I FEEL NO EVIL PRESENCE.
HM.
FUGIT! NO HARM, NO FOUL, RIGHT?
VROOOOM

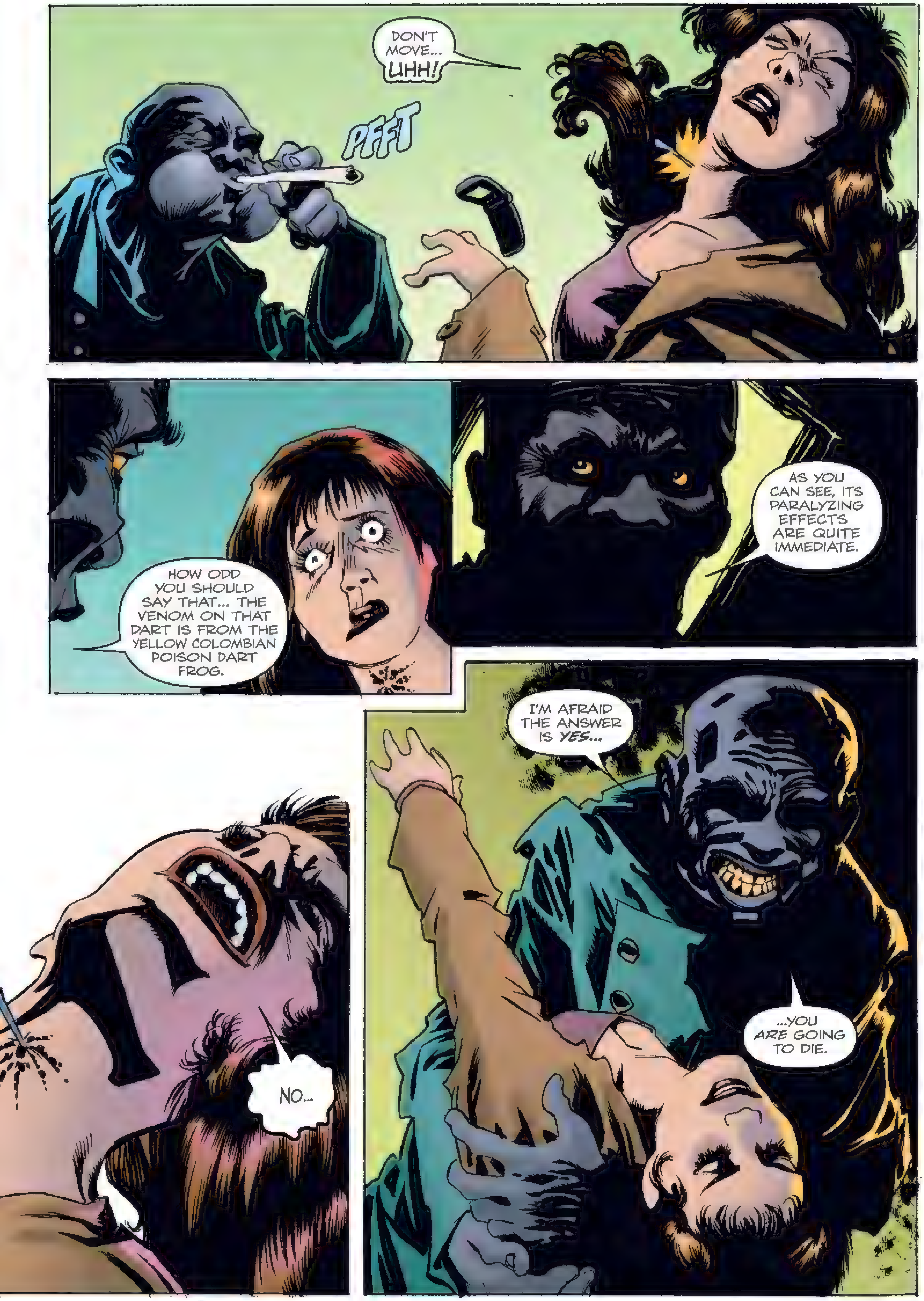
WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?
WE WENT TO THE GYM.
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED BUFF.
NO... THE CRIME SCENE YOU TOLD US TO MEET YOU AT.
YOU TOOK TOO LONG.
LEMME SEE THE FUCKIN' BODY.
CHANGE THAT TO BODIES.
FROM THE GYM?
AFTER I CALLED YOU, WE FOUND A FEW MORE INSIDE.
HOW MANY?
WE SET THEM UP FOR YOU...

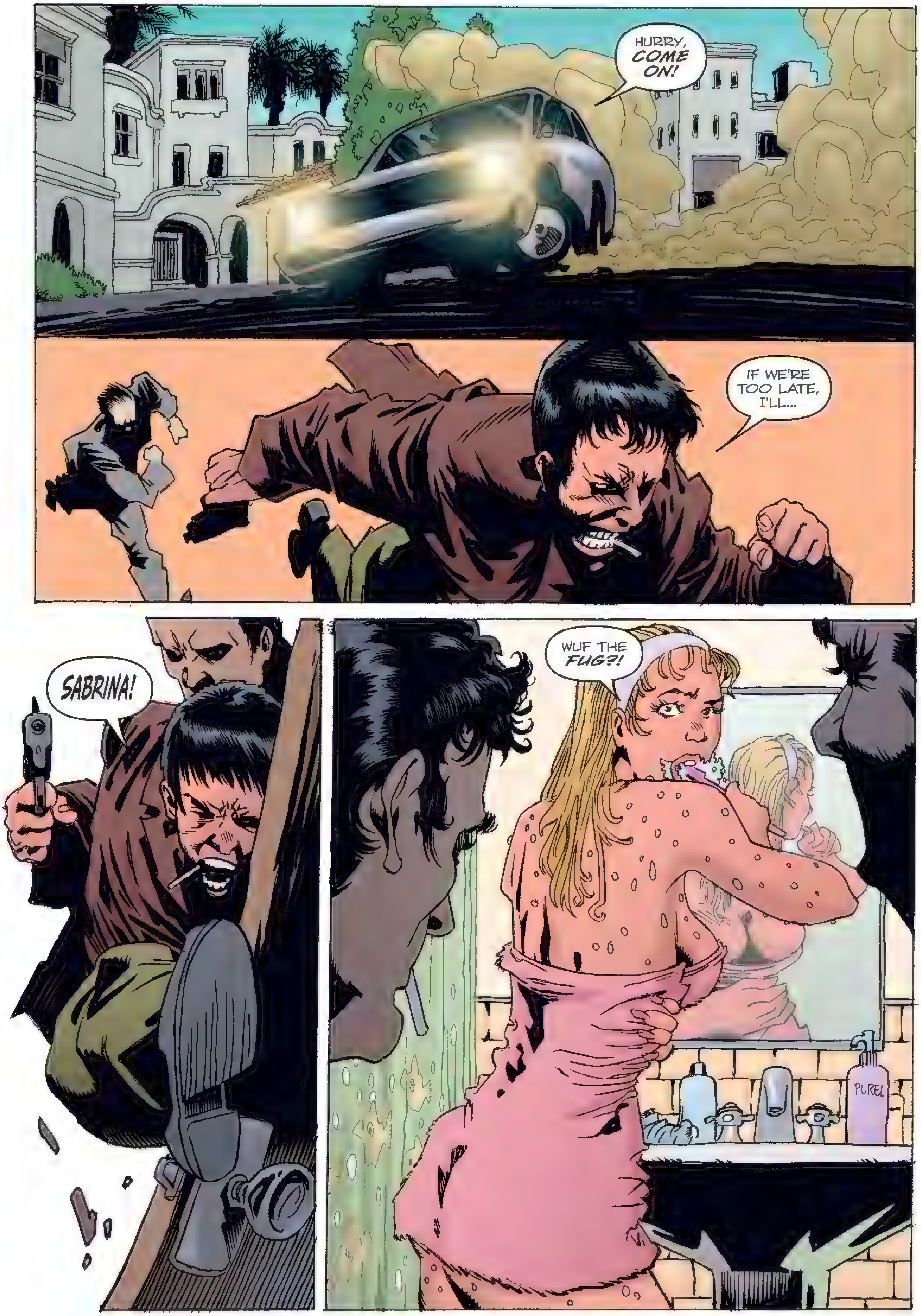
AW, CRAP.
PROFESSIONAL AMPUTATIONS. LOOK HOW CLEAN THE CUTS ARE AND THE CARE TAKEN TO REMOVE THE BONE FROM THE SOCKET.
ALL ARE ABNORMALLY LARGE IN SIZE.
THREE BODIES TOTAL.
DOESN'T TAKE A GENIUS TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.
YEAH... CLEAR AS DAY.

POLYNICE IS A GRADE-A TWISTED FUCK. HE LIKES TO PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS... EVEN IF HE HAS TO MAKE THEM DEAD TO PLAY WITH THEM.
LOVELY.
SABRINA TELLS ME YOU'RE MARRIED. THAT'S NEWS. WHERE'S THE ROCK?
I USUALLY DON'T WEAR IT DURING WORK HOURS IN CASE I HAVE TO CLOBBER A DUDE.
YEAH, SKIN'S A BITCH TO GET OUT OF JEWELRY.
I GUESS I'M NOT A GENIUS BECAUSE THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE TO ME. WHY NOT TELL ME WHAT'S CLEAR AS DAY?
HE'S HARVESTING BODY PARTS.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
PROBABLY TO BRING BACK TO LIFE AND SEND AFTER ME TO KILL ME AND SHIT.
ARE YOU WORRIED?
NAW, FUCK THAT CRAZY ASSHOLE. HE'S TRIED TO KILL ME BEFORE. I ALWAYS COME OUT ON TOP.
YOU FELL OUT A WINDOW TO ESCAPE HIM LAST TIME, DIDN'T YOU?
YEAH, SO? WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
A SORT OF REVERSED PROJECTION OF WHAT YOU MIGHT BE UP AGAINST.
GEE, THANKS. THAT'S A BIG FUCKIN' HELP.
BRUEGER, WHAT'S THE INSIDE WORD ON HOW POLYNICE BROKE FROM PRISON? HE HAVE ANY HELP?
WELL... ONE OF THE SURVIVORS DESCRIBED "CREATURES" WHO AIDED IN THE ESCAPE AS "LIKE SPIDERS WITH HUMAN HEADS."
LOTS OF DISMEMBERED BODIES FOUND ON THE SCENE?
YEP.
GODDAMMIT.
OKAY, CHECK THIS OUT. HE TOOK ENOUGH PARTS TO BUILD A BODY, EXCEPT FOR THE HEADS...
HE PICKED THE BODIES FOR SIZE, OBVIOUSLY, BUT WHAT'S HE GOING AFTER FOR THE HEAD?
HE'S AFTER YOU. I WOULD GUESS SOMETHING PERSONAL.
SABRINA.

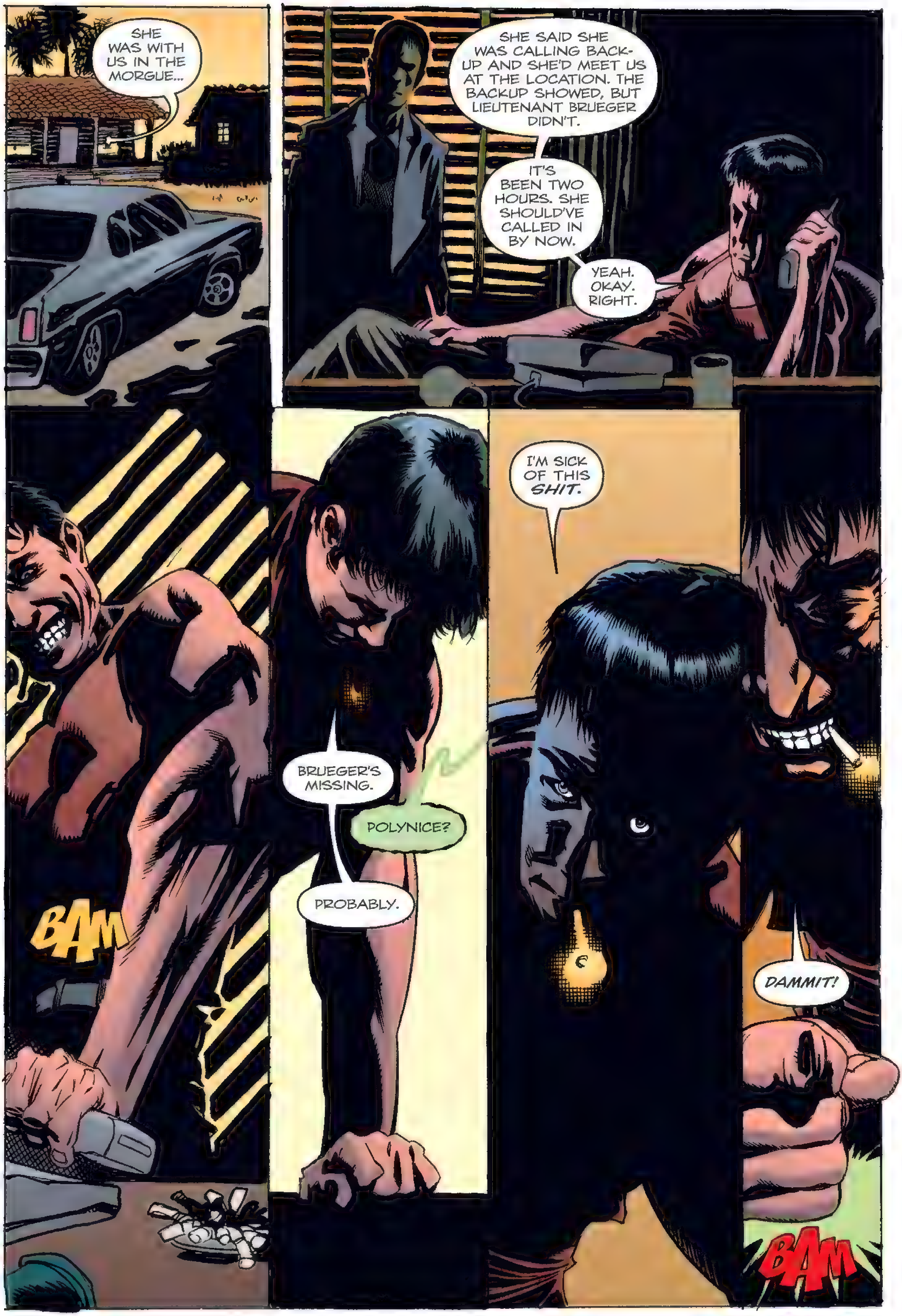
GO! I'LL HAVE UNITS SENT TO HER APARTMENT.
MORGUE
THANKS, HENDERSON. LET ME KNOW WHEN THE OFFICERS ARRIVE. BYE.
AMAZING.
EXCUSE ME? DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
I WAS SAYING, IT IS *ASTOUNDING*...
...HOW WELL MY PLANS ARE WORKING OUT!


DON'T MOVE... UHH!
PFFT
HOW ODD YOU SHOULD SAY THAT... THE VENOM ON THAT DART IS FROM THE YELLOW COLOMBIAN POISON DART FROG.
AS YOU CAN SEE, ITS PARALYZING EFFECTS ARE QUITE IMMEDIATE.
NO...
I'M AFRAID THE ANSWER IS *YES...*
...YOU ARE GOING TO DIE.


HURRY, COME ON!
IF WE'RE TOO LATE, I'LL...
SABRINA!
WUF THE FUG?!
PUREL

THIS BETTER BE GOOD.
I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE AN OLD ENEMY OF MINE, DR. POLYNICE, MIGHT COME AFTER YOU.
IS YOUR PHONE BROKEN?
NOOOO, BUT I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU, BABE. COME ON. DON'T BE LIKE THIS.
HOW ABOUT WE MAKE IT A LITTLE LESS CROWDED IN HERE? I THINK EVERYBODY KNOWS WHAT I LOOK LIKE IN A TOWEL NOW.
YEAH, SURE, BABE. NO SWEAT.
FALSE ALARM! *EVERYBODY OUT!*
SORRY ABOUT THAT. I WAS JUST WORRIED.
WELL, YOU SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ME.
AT ANY RATE, POLYNICE IS ON THE LOOSE. YOU GOT ANYWHERE YOU CAN GO?
GO? I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE. I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
I'D FEEL BETTER IF YOU LET ME LEAVE A COUPLE OF MO'LOCK'S PALS TO STAND GUARD.
IT WILL BE OUR PLEASURE TO ASSIST MISS LYNCH.

THOSE TWO? I THOUGHT THE IDEA WAS FOR ME *NOT* TO BE TERRORIZED.
THEY'LL STAY OUTSIDE. I CAN'T RISK ANYTHING HAPPENING TO YOU BECAUSE OF ME.
THIS MIGHT BE THE MOST ROMANTIC THING YOU'VE EVER DONE. I HOPE I CAN KEEP THIS TOWEL ON.
DON'T GO CRAZY ON ME, SISTER. I GOT BIG TROUBLES.
AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU SO YUMMY.
SHUT UP!
CAN I TAKE YOU OUT LATER? I SORTA HAVE A MADMAN AFTER ME.
YOU GO GET HIM. I'LL BE FINE. I HAVE THOSE DEAD THINGS WATCHING OVER ME AND MAYBE YOU FORGOT ABOUT THE TEN-GAUGE YOU GOT ME FOR MY BIRTHDAY, BUT I'LL KEEP IT CLOSE.
OKAY, YOU TWO STAND GUARD. MO'LOCK, LET'S HEAD HOME AND... WHERE THE HELL IS BRUEGER? DID SHE FUCKING FLAKE ON ME?!


SHE WAS WITH US IN THE MORGUE...
SHE SAID SHE WAS CALLING BACK-UP AND SHE'D MEET US AT THE LOCATION. THE BACKUP SHOWED, BUT LIEUTENANT BRUEGER DIDN'T.
IT'S BEEN TWO HOURS. SHE SHOULD'VE CALLED IN BY NOW.
YEAH. OKAY. RIGHT.
BAM
BRUEGER'S MISSING.
POLYNICE?
PROBABLY.
I'M SICK OF THIS *SHIT.*
DAMMIT!
BAM

THEY WANT ME, I'M RIGHT HERE. COME AND FUCKING GET ME.

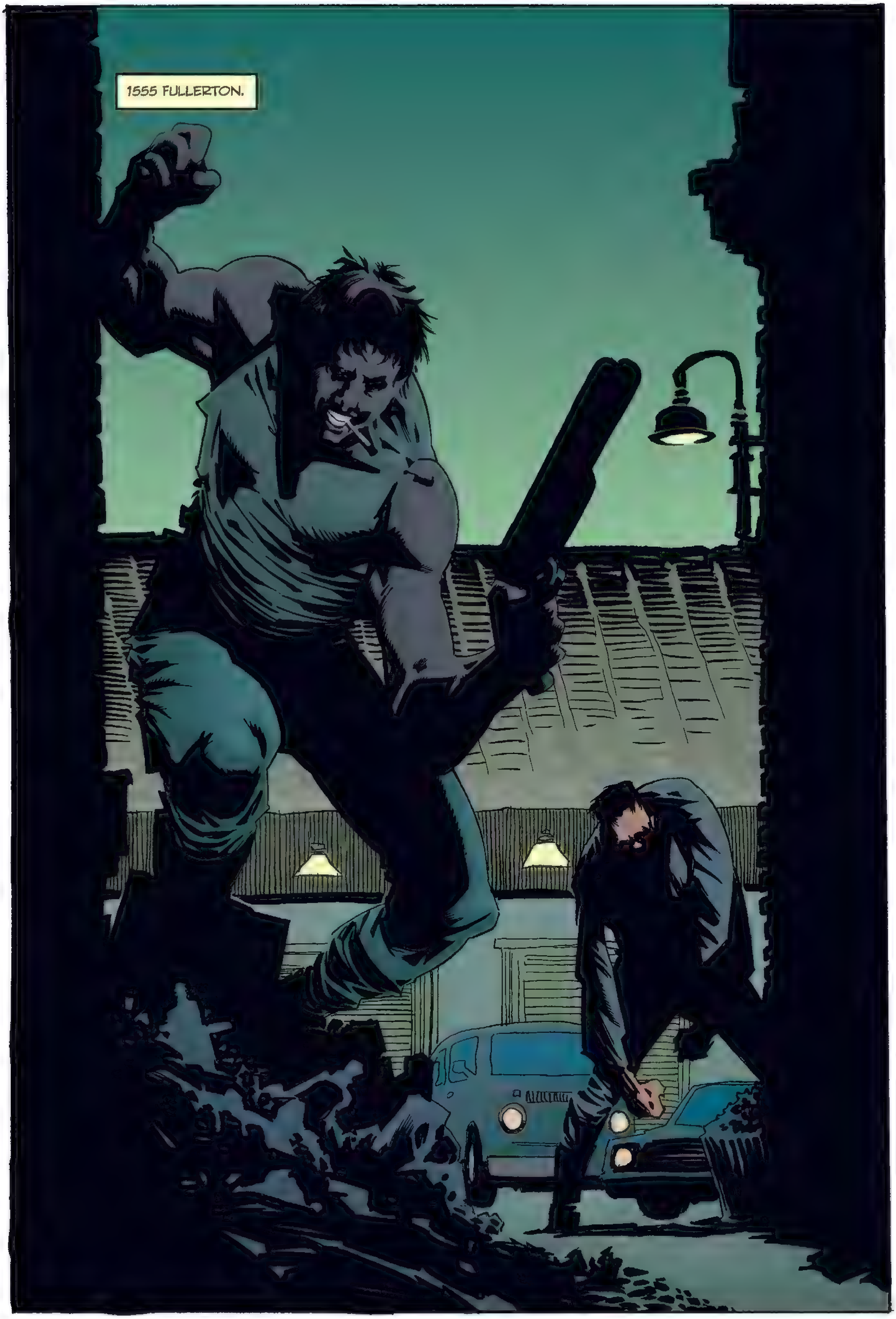
I THINK IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR US TO BE A BIT MORE PROACTIVE.
GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT THE DOCTOR AND THE LIEUTENANT. SEE WHAT THE WORD IS ON THE STREET. TELL THOSE DEAD FUCKS TO GET ME SOME INFO.
I'M ON IT.
BEEP-BOOP-BEEP-BEEP-BOOP
LUTHER, THIS IS MO'LOCK...

TELL CAL I'LL DO MY BEST.
TAXI
YESSSS?
MO'LOCK, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
UPS
UPS
UPS
UPS
UPS
UPS
PEOPLE
TIME
I'VE HEARD THINGS.
ORBES
NATIONAL REVIEW
F
LOS ANGE TIMES

SUSPICIOUS.
INDEED.
I WILL LET McDONALD AND MO'LOCK KNOW.
BEEP-BOOP-BEEP-BEEP-BOOP-BOOP-
BOOP-BEEP-BOOP-BEEP-BEEP-BOOP

MORRIS AND LEDGER HAVE INFORMATION.
LAY IT ON ME.
DOWNTOWN. WAREHOUSE. 1555 FULLERTON.

EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, EVERYBODY WHO DARED TO GET CLOSE TO ME PAID WITH THEIR LIVES.
MY MOTHER AND FATHER. EVEN MY SISTER AND LITTLE BROTHER.
THAT'S SOME THIRTY-ODD YEARS OF PEOPLE TAKING HITS BECAUSE THEY LET ME INTO THEIR HEARTS.
THAT'S WHY A DEAD GUY IS MY ONLY FRIEND.
THIS STOPS TODAY.
NEW RULES... NOBODY FUCKS WITH ME OR MY FRIENDS EVER AGAIN.
AND SO HELP ME, IF I HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT IN POLYNICE'S INTESTINES, I'LL GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS.


1555 FULLERTON.

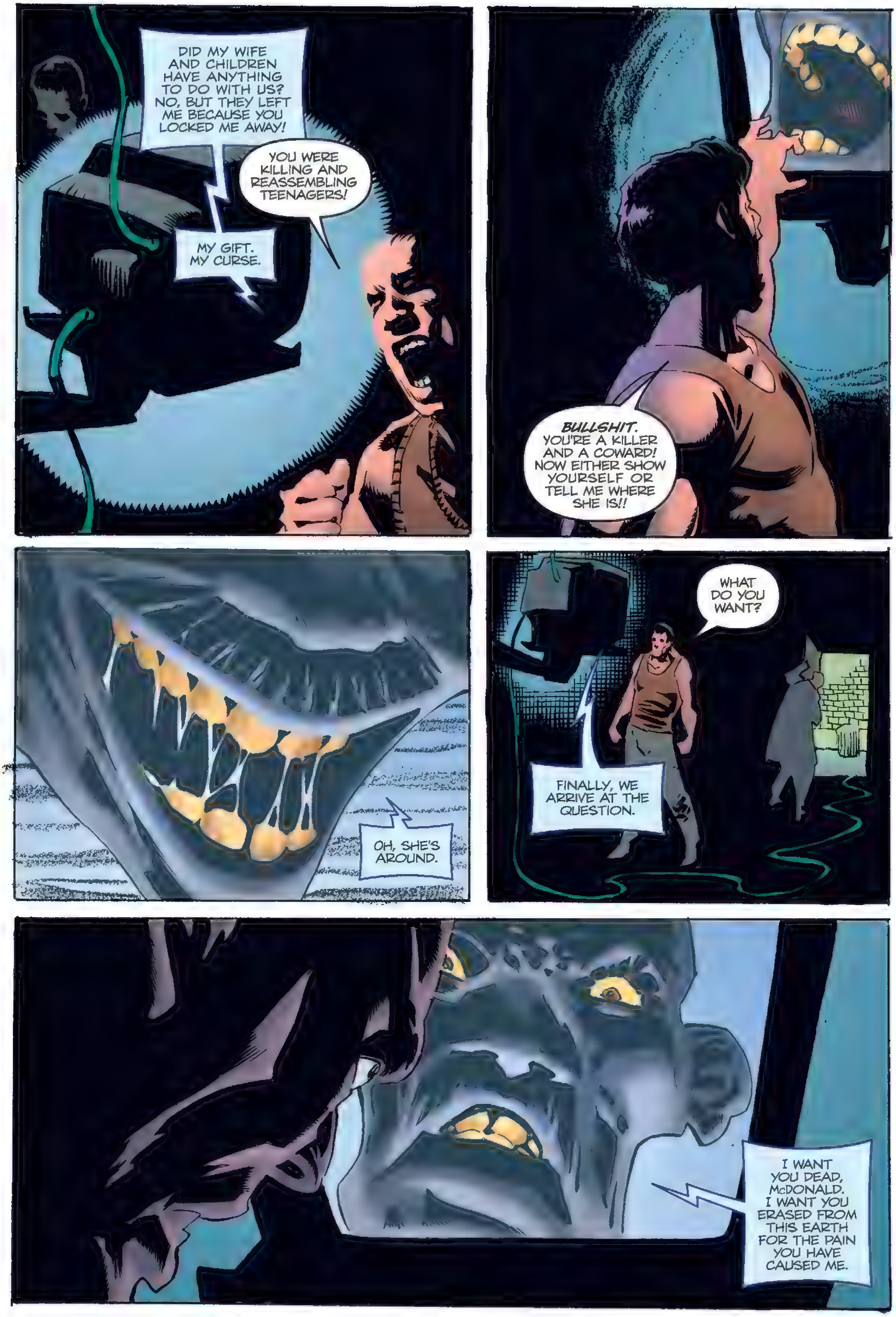
IN THERE, CAL McDONALD.
DO YOU REQUIRE BACKUP?
I GOT IT. THIS IS MINE.
POLYNICE!
STOP!
BLAM

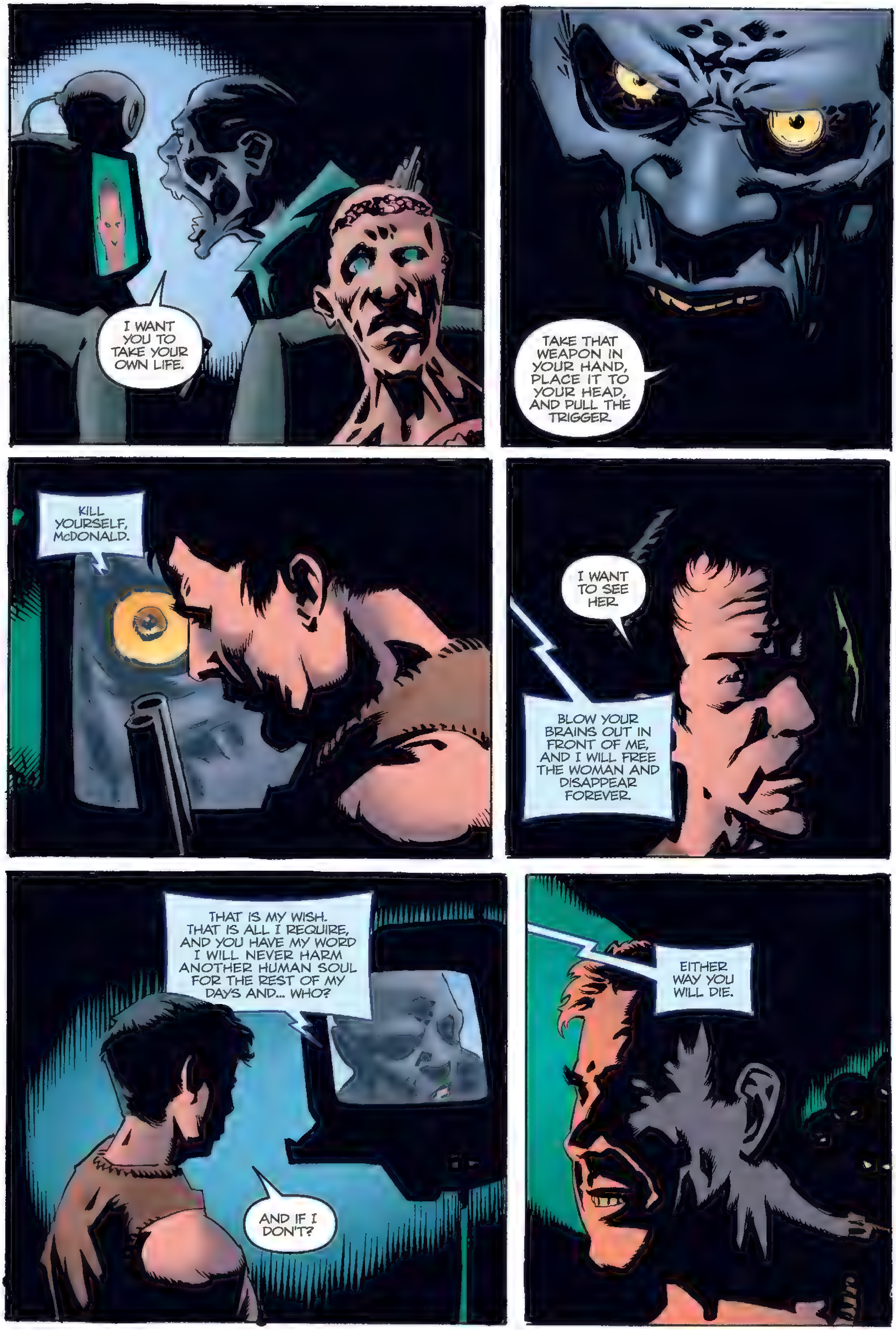
BLAM
WHERE'S POLYNICE?!
KI CHAK
WE CAN DO THIS ALL DAY.
TELL ME WHERE DR. POLYNICE IS, OR I'LL TAKE DOWN EVERY LAST FUCKING ONE OF YOU.
BOOM
CAL...
...OVER HERE.

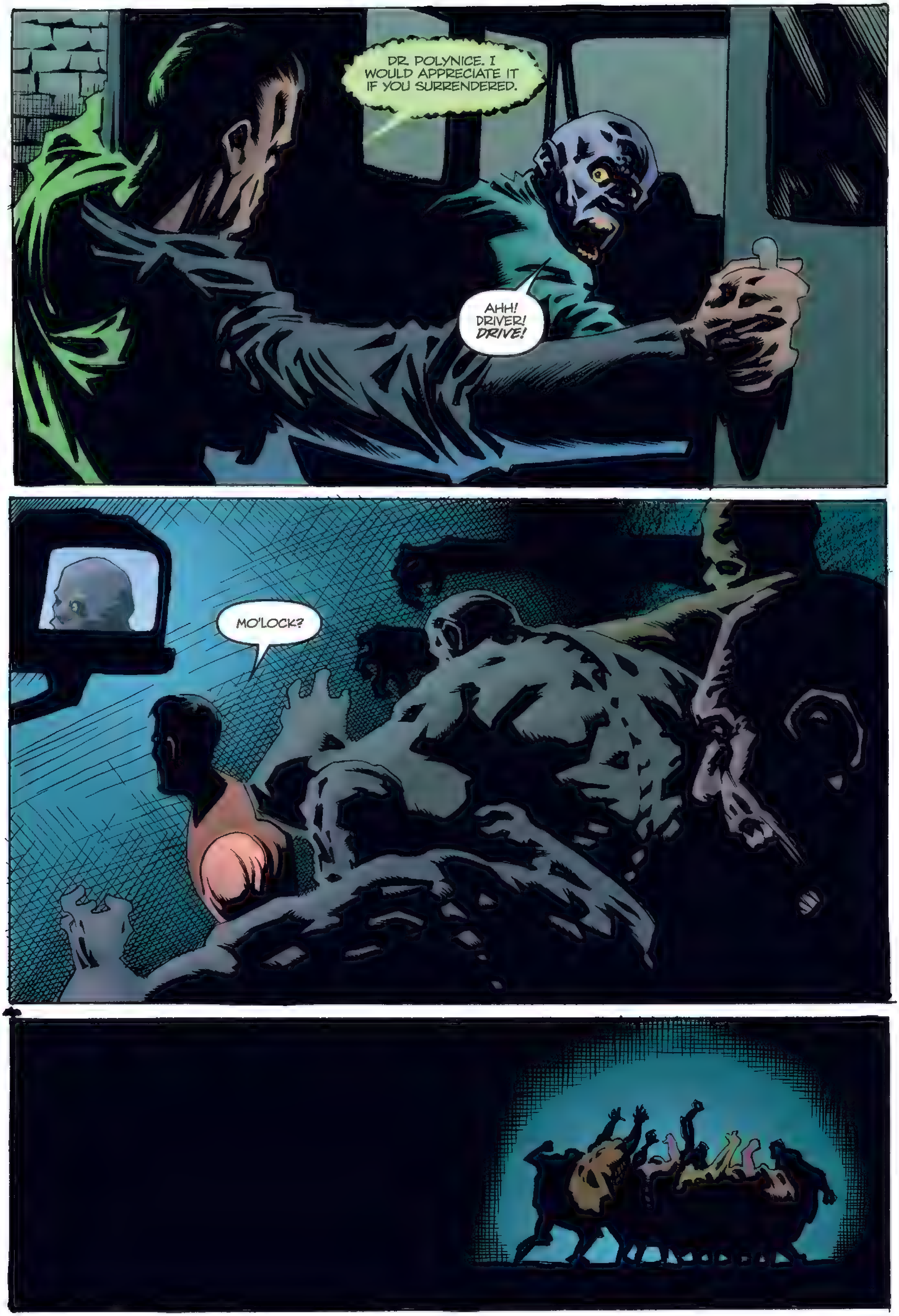
AW, JESUS...
NO.

...BRUEGER...
IS IT THAT EASY, DETECTIVE?

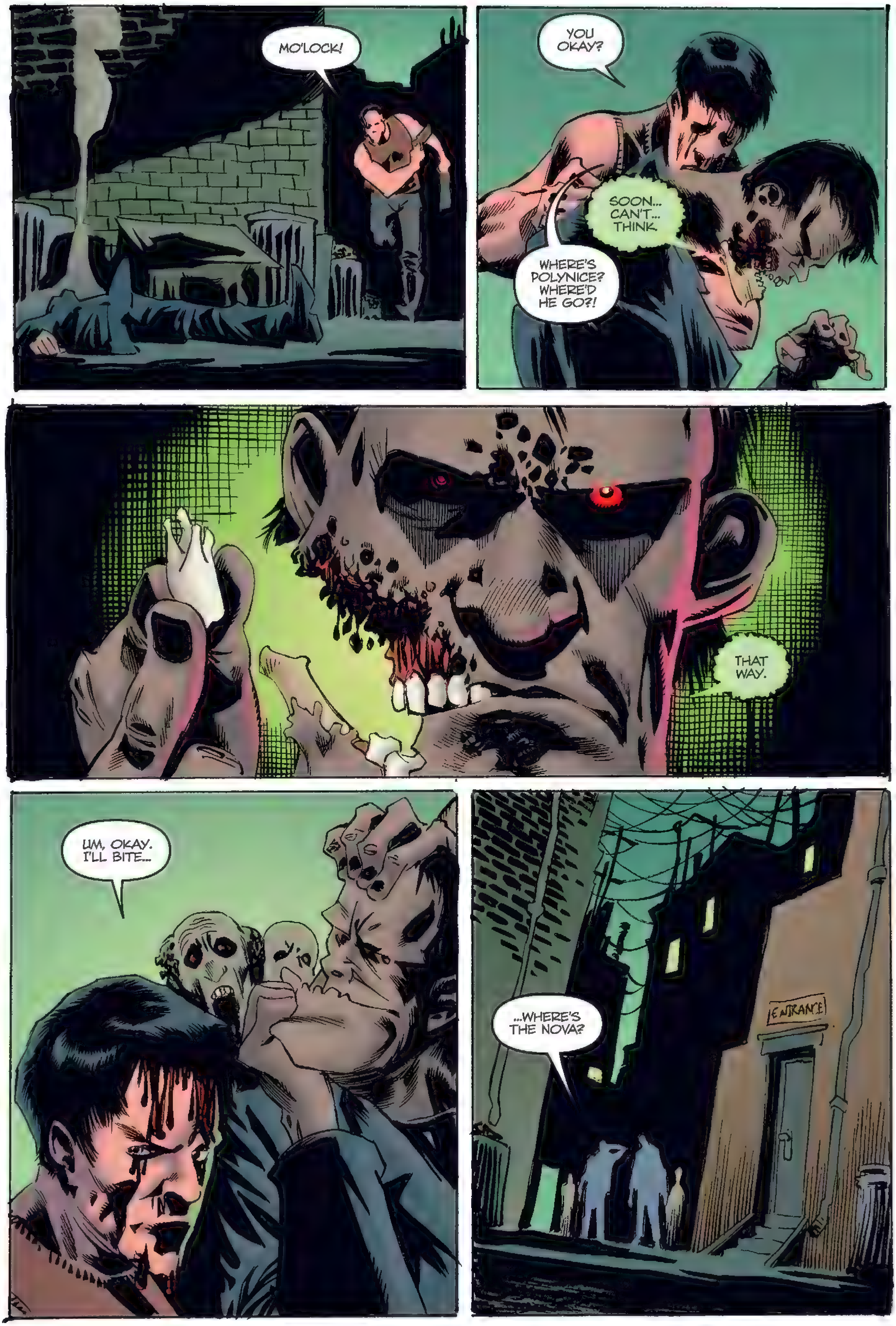
THAT EASY TO BRING YOU TO YOUR KNEES? I HAVE TO ADMIT, I'M SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE A TOUGHER NUT TO CRACK.
POLYNICE, YOU FUCKING SCUM! WHERE'S THE WOMAN?!
WHERE'S BRUEGER?
YOU CAN WIPE YOUR TEARS, McDONALD. SHE IS QUITE ALIVE, I ASSURE YOU.
IT HURTS, DOESN'T IT? HAVING LOVED ONES TORN AWAY FROM YOU?
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HURT ME? KILLED MY CREATIONS? HAD ME LOCKED AWAY FROM MY FAMILY?
YOU HAVE SINGLE-HANDEDLY TURNED MY LIFE'S WORK INTO A MINOR OBSESSION OVERSHADOWED BY MY HATRED FOR YOU!
COME AND GET ME. JUST LET BRUEGER GO. SHE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS... WITH *US*.

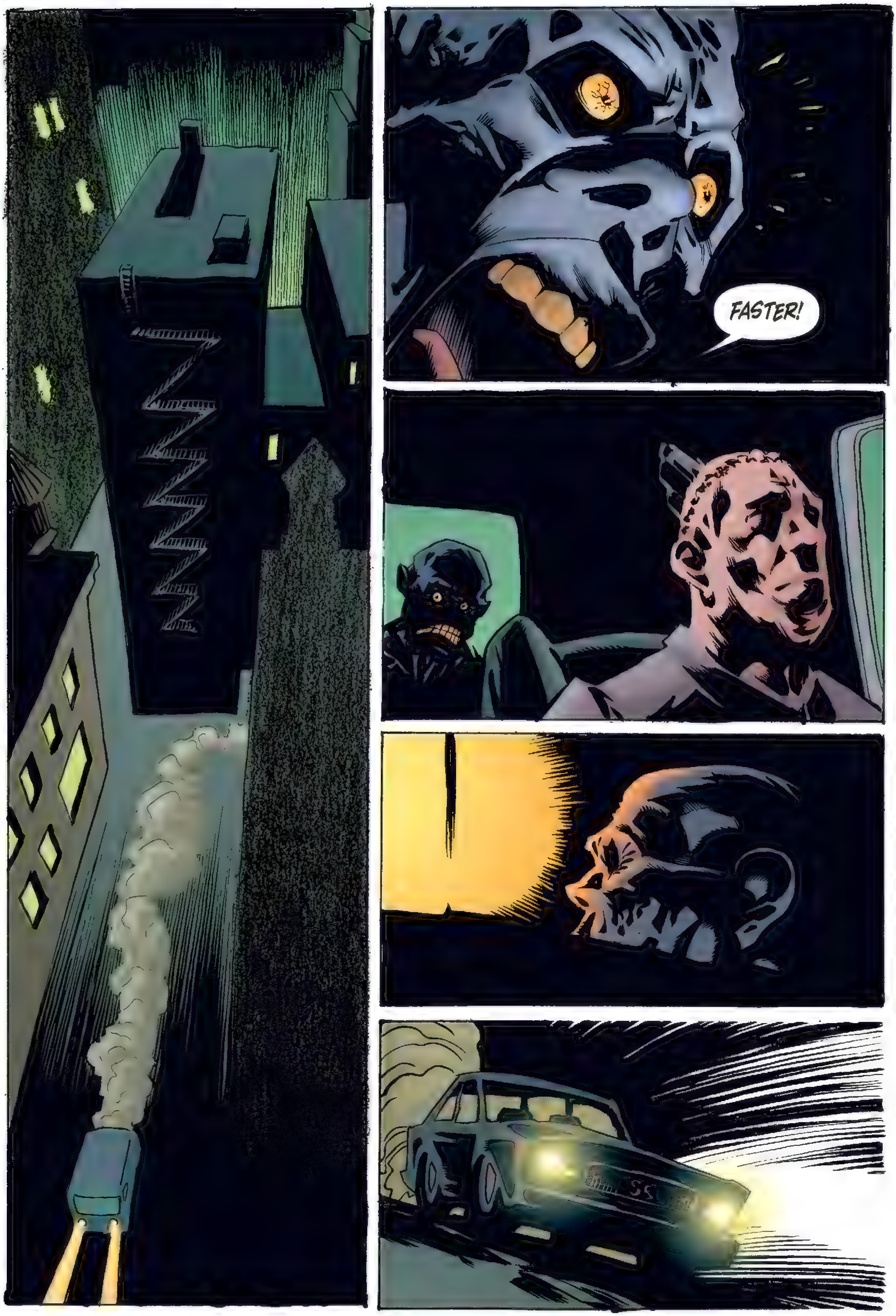

DID MY WIFE AND CHILDREN HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH US? NO, BUT THEY LEFT ME BECAUSE YOU LOCKED ME AWAY!
YOU WERE KILLING AND REASSEMBLING TEENAGERS!
MY GIFT. MY CURSE.
BULLSHIT. YOU'RE A KILLER AND A COWARD! NOW EITHER SHOW YOURSELF OR TELL ME WHERE SHE IS!!
OH, SHE'S AROUND.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
FINALLY, WE ARRIVE AT THE QUESTION.
I WANT YOU DEAD, McDONALD. I WANT YOU ERASED FROM THIS EARTH FOR THE PAIN YOU HAVE CAUSED ME.

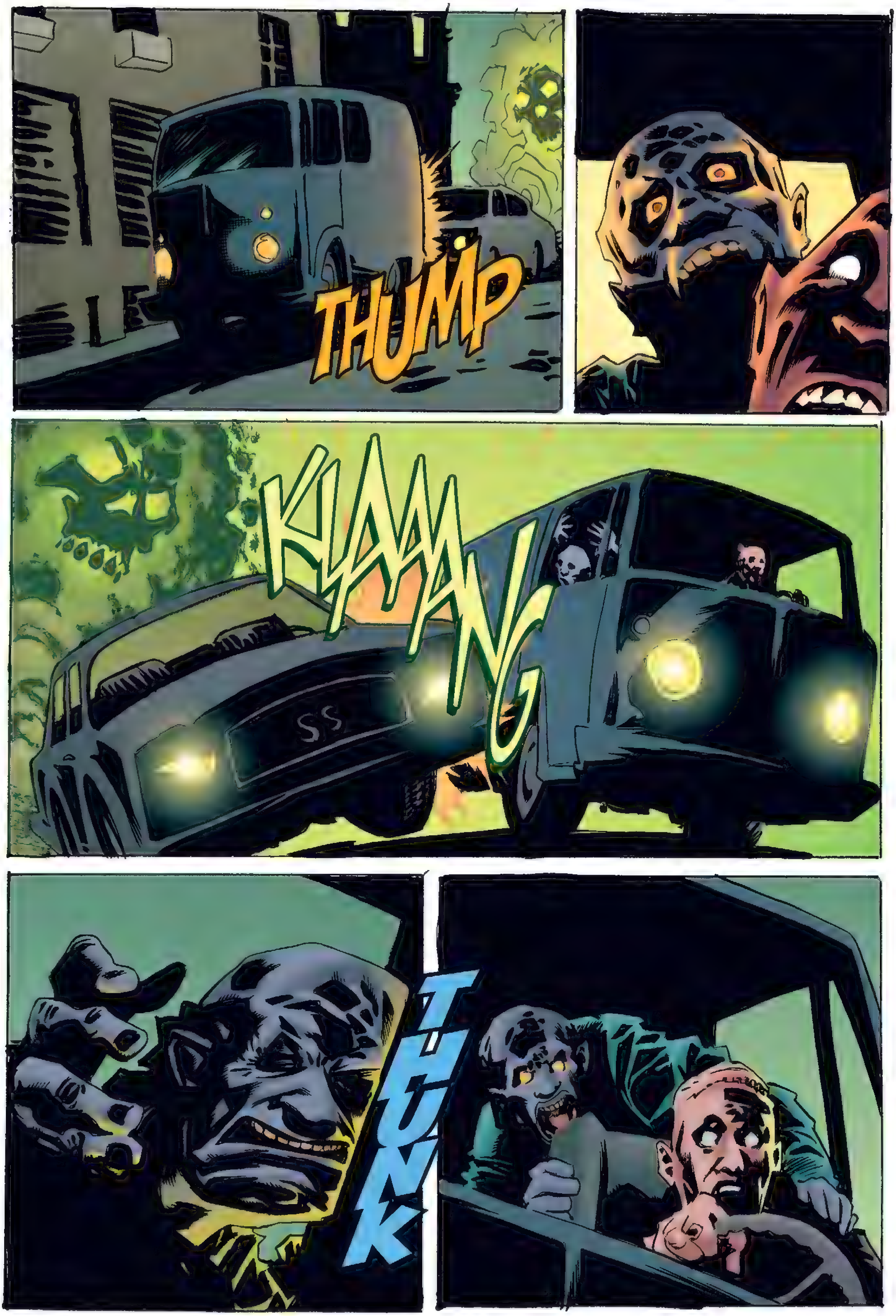

I WANT YOU TO TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE.
TAKE THAT WEAPON IN YOUR HAND, PLACE IT TO YOUR HEAD, AND PULL THE TRIGGER.
KILL YOURSELF, McDONALD.
I WANT TO SEE HER.
BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT IN FRONT OF ME, AND I WILL FREE THE WOMAN AND DISAPPEAR FOREVER.
THAT IS MY WISH. THAT IS ALL I REQUIRE, AND YOU HAVE MY WORD I WILL NEVER HARM ANOTHER HUMAN SOUL FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS AND... WHO?
AND IF I DON'T?
EITHER WAY YOU WILL DIE.

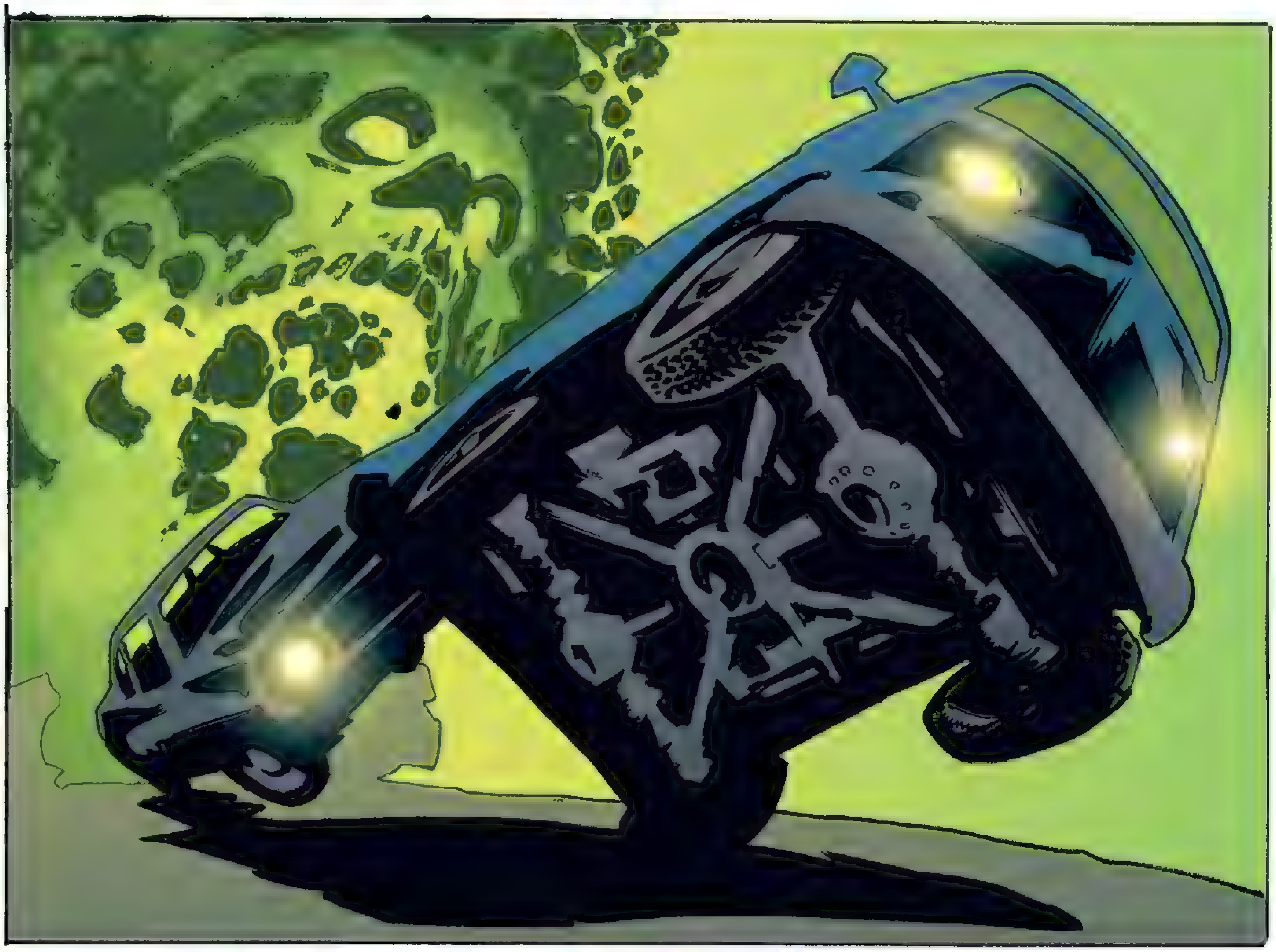

DR. POLYNICE. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU SURRENDERED.
AHH! DRIVER! *DRIVE!*
MO'LOCK?

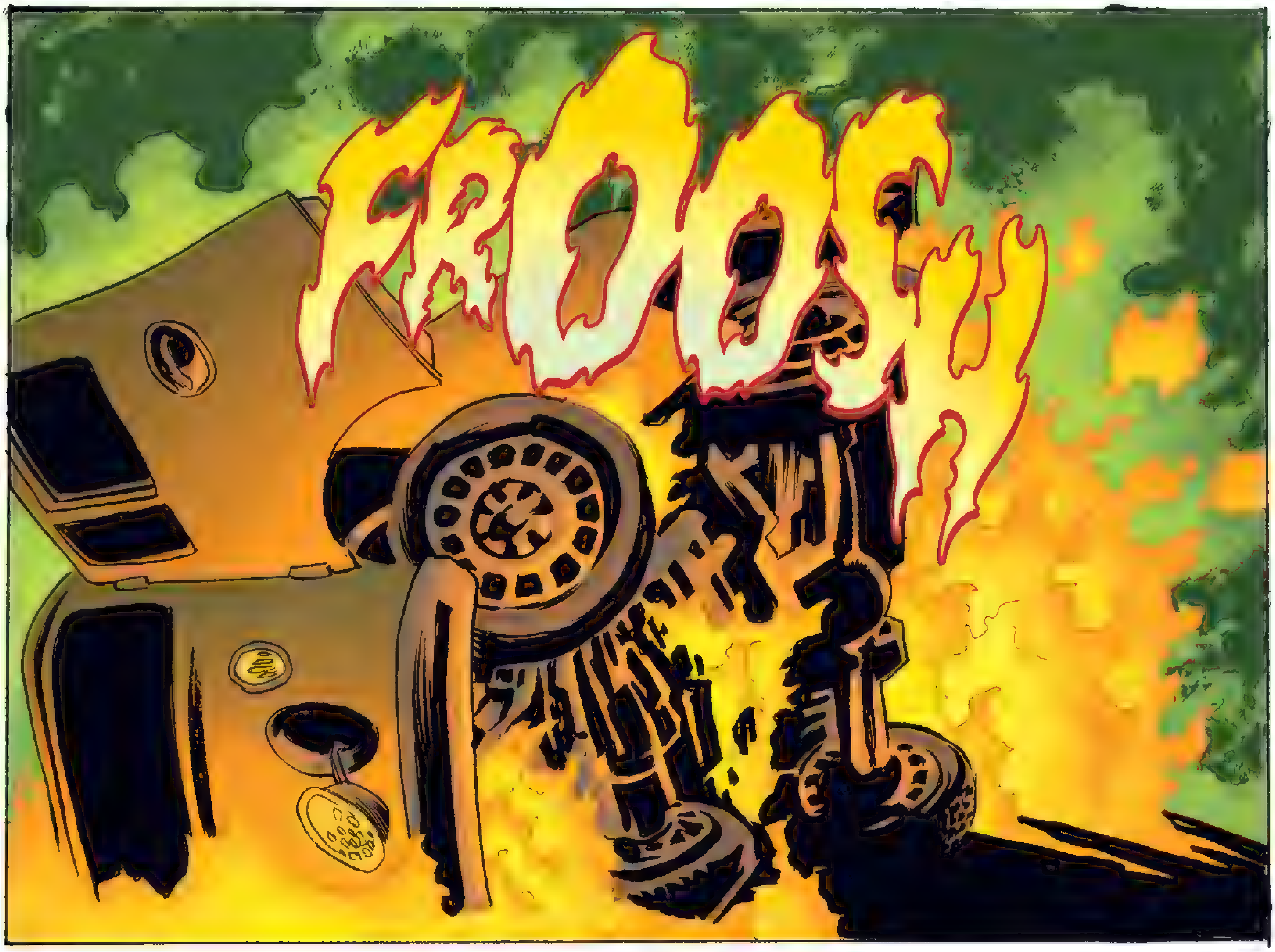
THAT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD, DOCTOR.
GOOD ENOUGH.
BLAM
NOW! DRIVE! DRIVE!
SKREEEEEEEEE
POW
POW
POW
WHERE IS HE?! WHERE IS HE?!

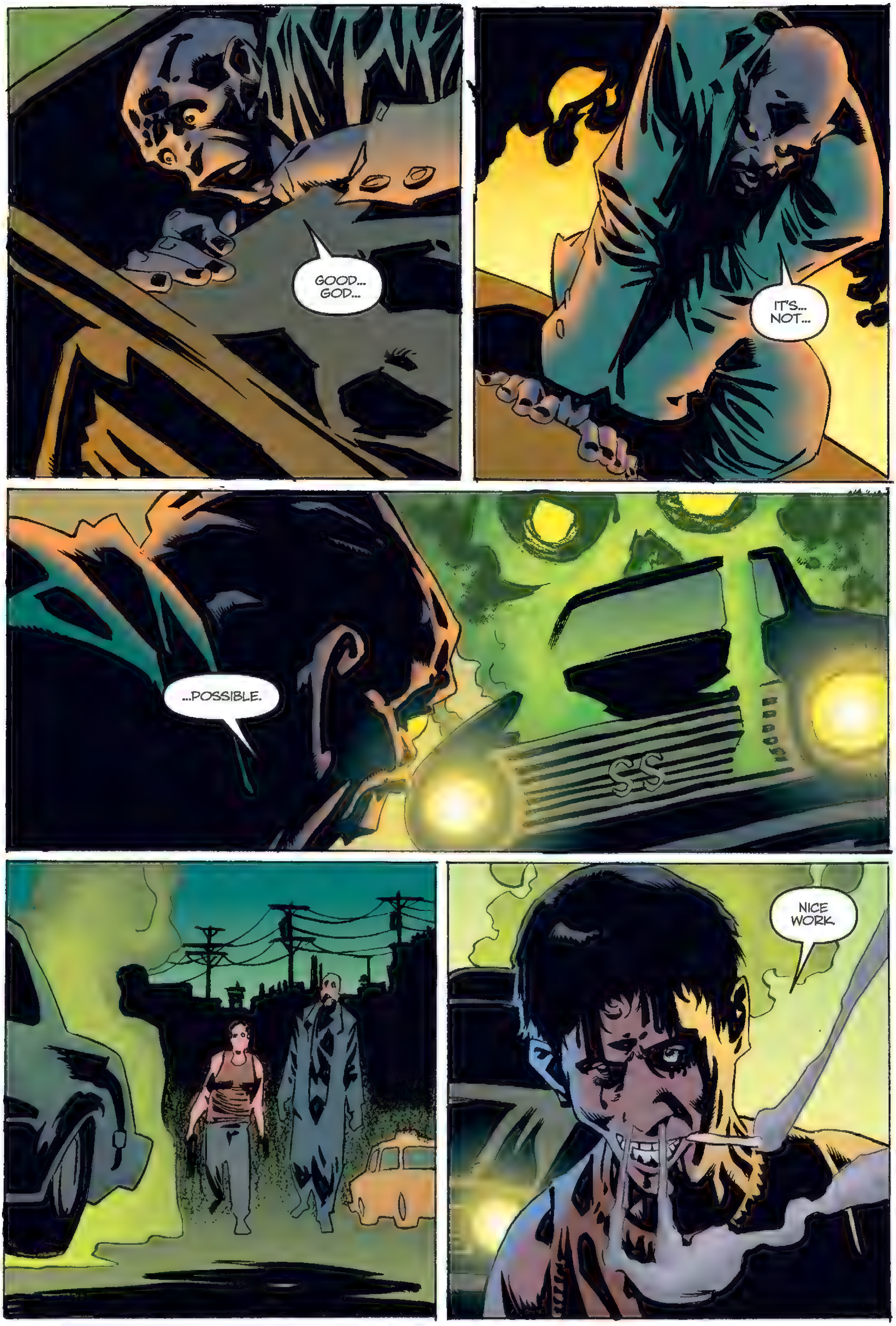

MO'LOCK!
YOU OKAY?
SOON... CAN'T... THINK.
WHERE'S POLYNICE? WHERE'D HE GO?!
THAT WAY.
UM, OKAY. I'LL BITE...
...WHERE'S THE NOVA?
ENTRANCE

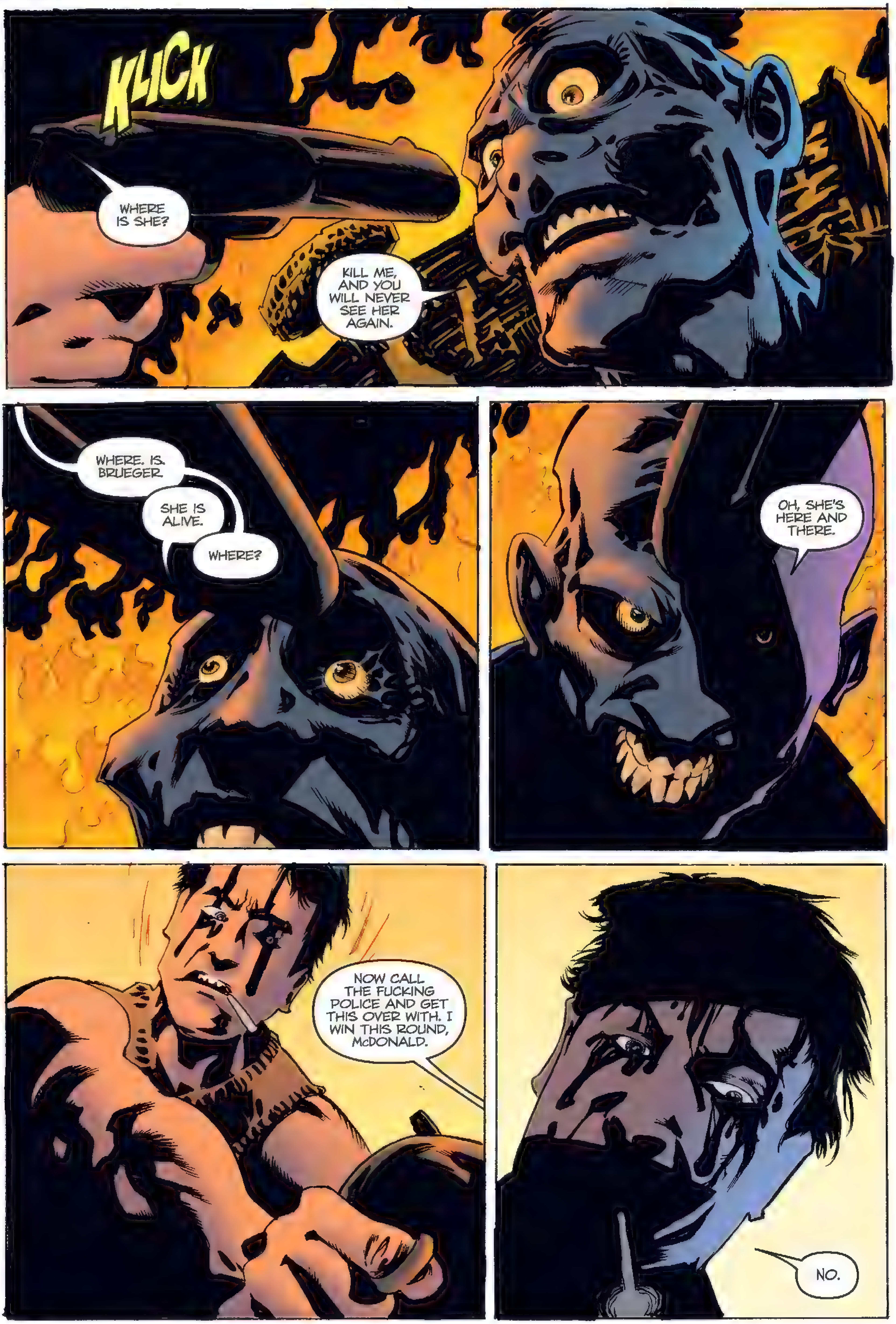

FASTER!

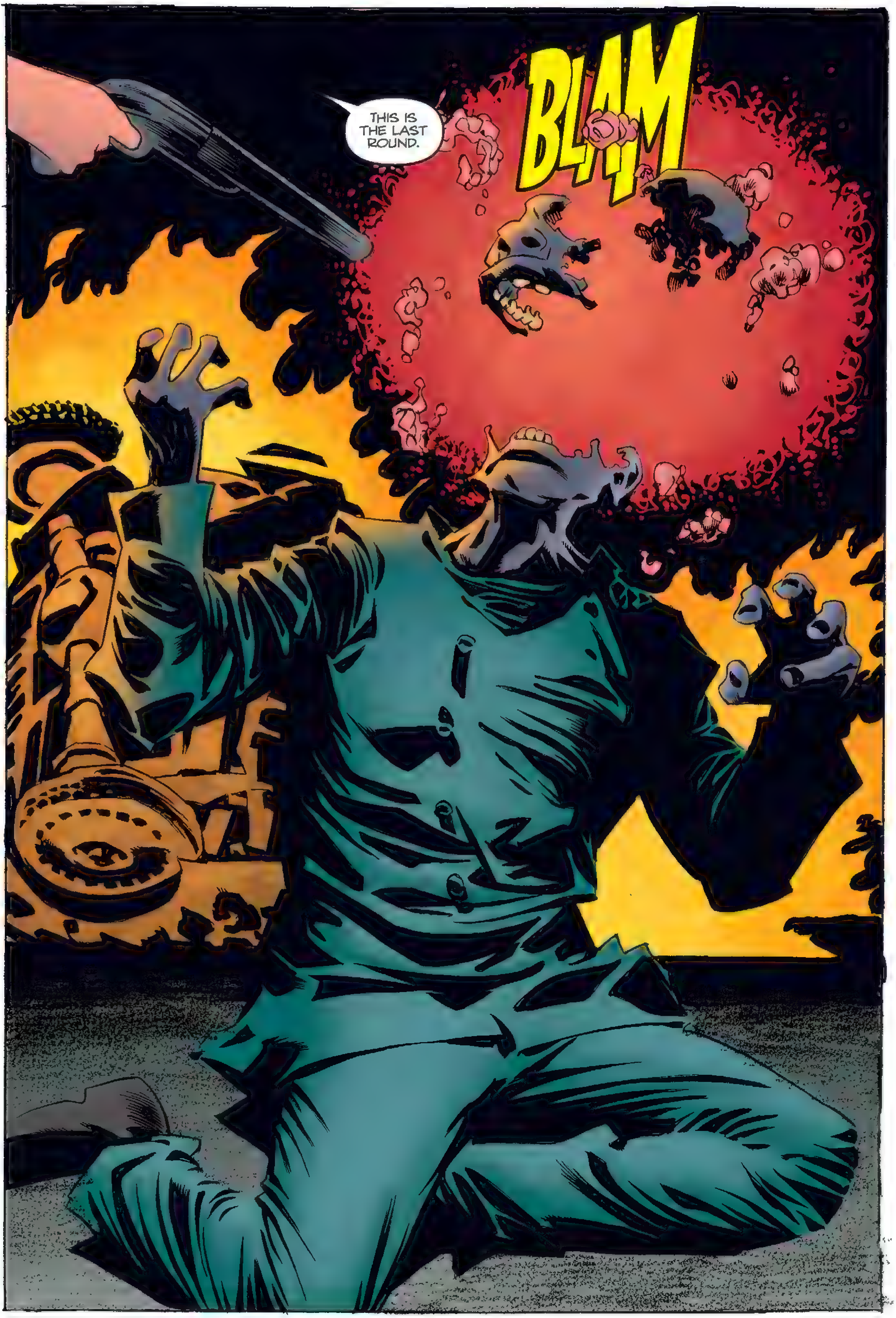

THUMP
KLAAANG
SS
THUNK

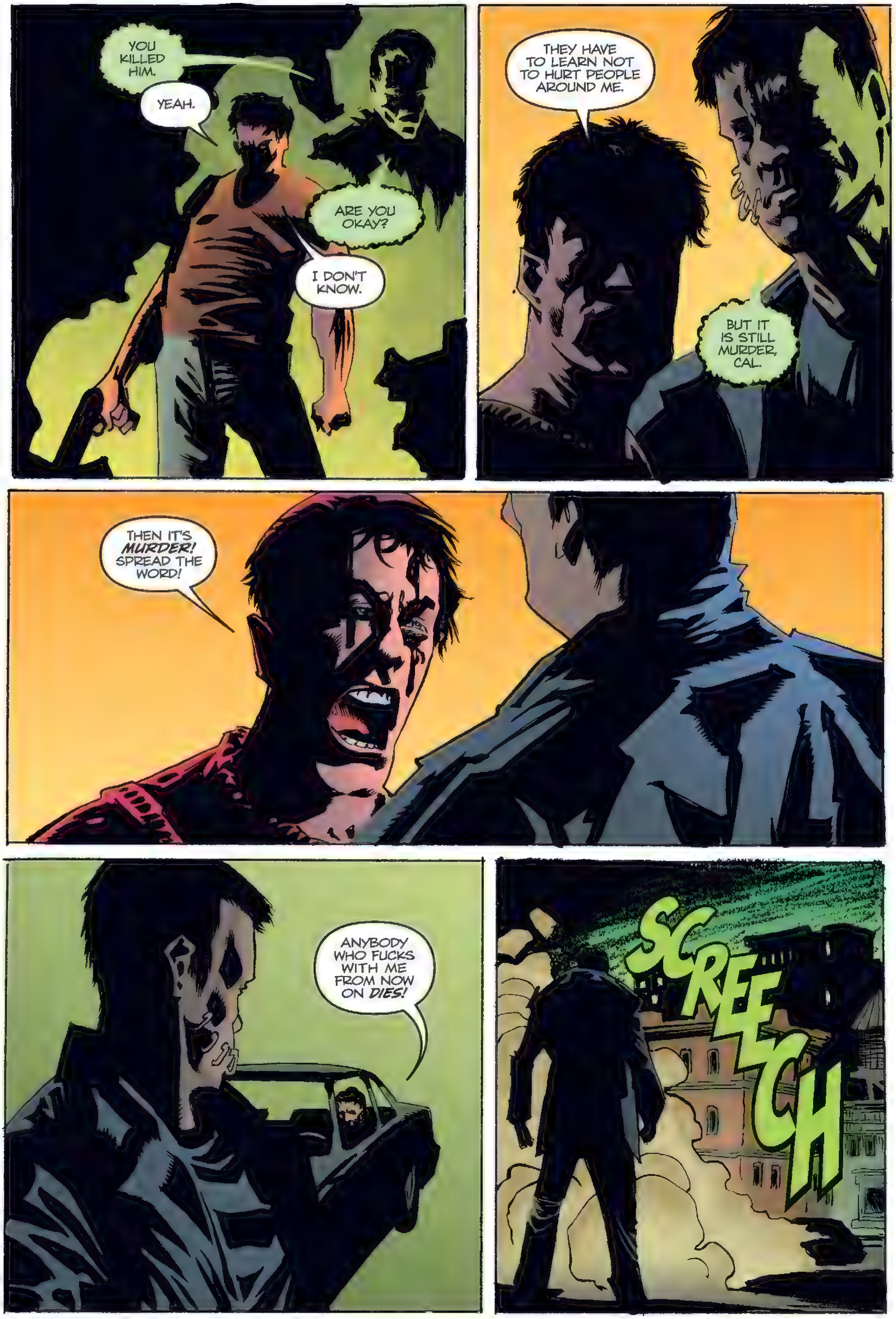


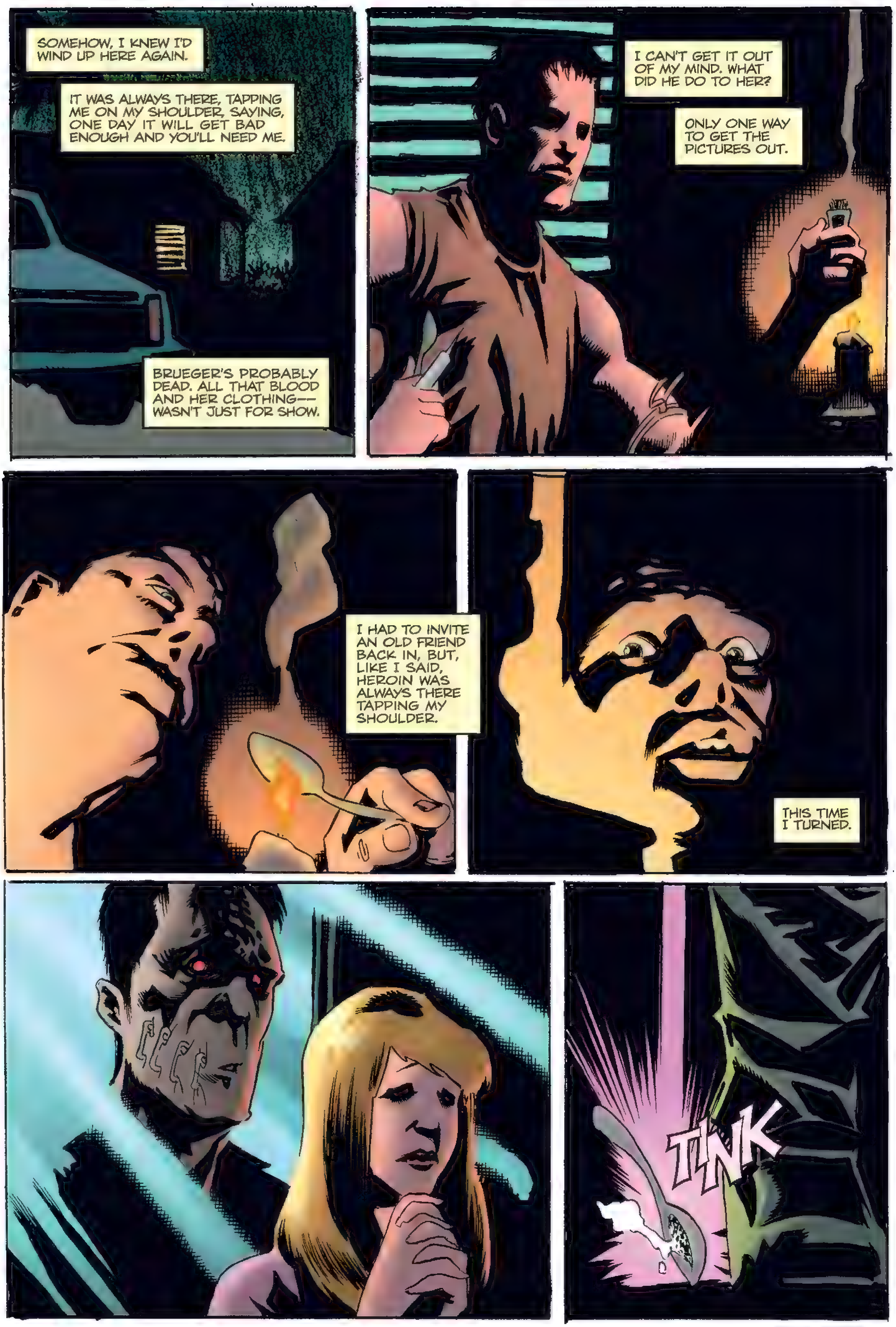

FROOSH

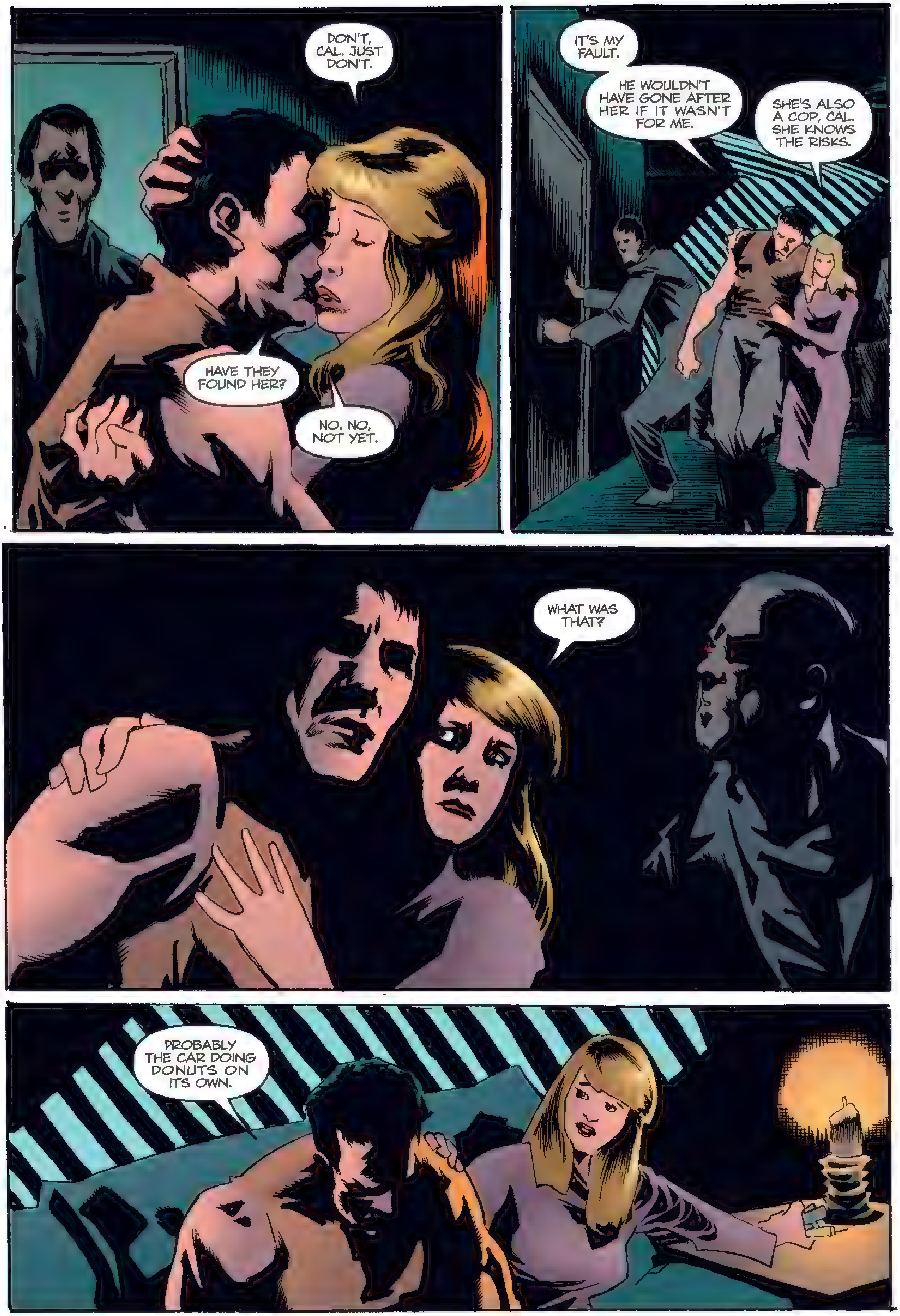

GOOD... GOD...
IT'S... NOT...
...POSSIBLE.
SS
NICE WORK.

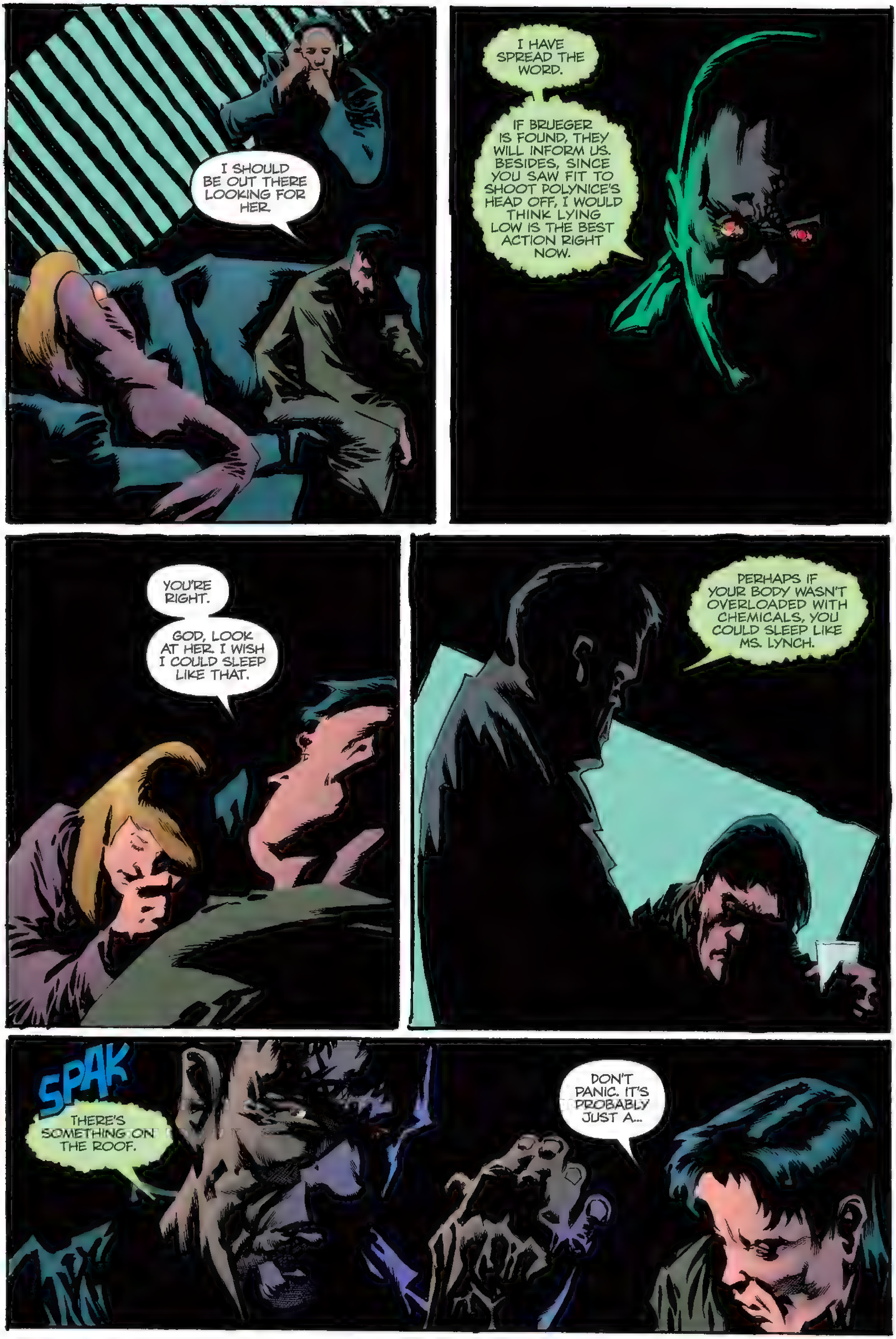

KLICK
WHERE IS SHE?
KILL ME, AND YOU WILL NEVER SEE HER AGAIN.
WHERE. IS. BRUEGER.
SHE IS ALIVE.
WHERE?
OH, SHE'S HERE AND THERE.
NOW CALL THE FUCKING POLICE AND GET THIS OVER WITH. I WIN THIS ROUND, McDONALD.
NO.


THIS IS THE LAST ROUND.
BLAM

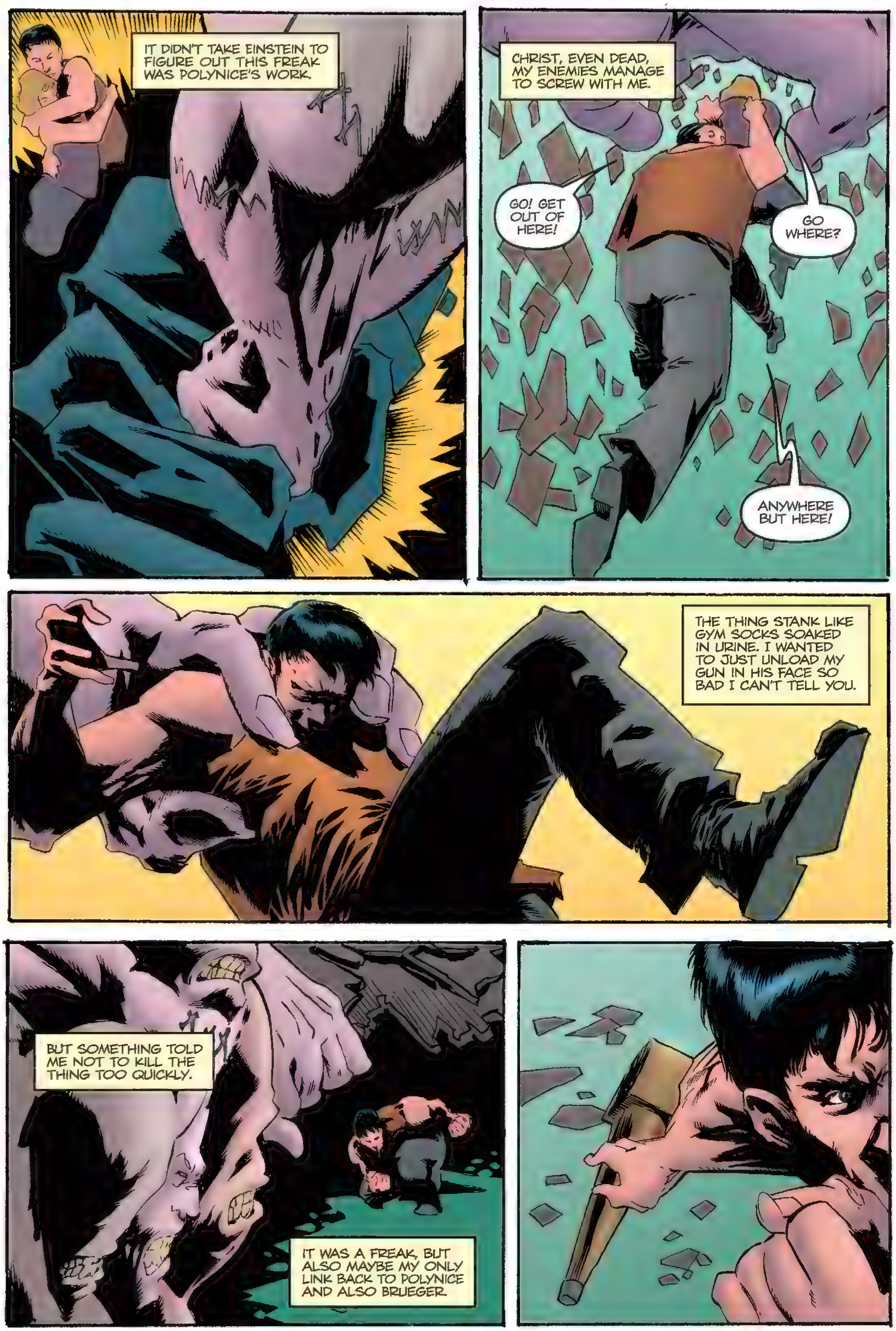

YOU KILLED HIM.
YEAH.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I DON'T KNOW.
THEY HAVE TO LEARN NOT TO HURT PEOPLE AROUND ME.
BUT IT IS STILL MURDER, CAL.
THEN IT'S *MURDER!* SPREAD THE WORD!
ANYBODY WHO FUCKS WITH ME FROM NOW ON *DIES!*
SCREECH


SOMEHOW, I KNEW I'D WIND UP HERE AGAIN.
IT WAS ALWAYS THERE, TAPPING ME ON MY SHOULDER, SAYING, ONE DAY IT WILL GET BAD ENOUGH AND YOU'LL NEED ME.
BRUEGER'S PROBABLY DEAD. ALL THAT BLOOD AND HER CLOTHING-- WASN'T JUST FOR SHOW.
I CAN'T GET IT OUT OF MY MIND. WHAT DID HE DO TO HER?
ONLY ONE WAY TO GET THE PICTURES OUT.
I HAD TO INVITE AN OLD FRIEND BACK IN, BUT, LIKE I SAID, HEROIN WAS ALWAYS THERE TAPPING MY SHOULDER.
THIS TIME I TURNED.
TINK

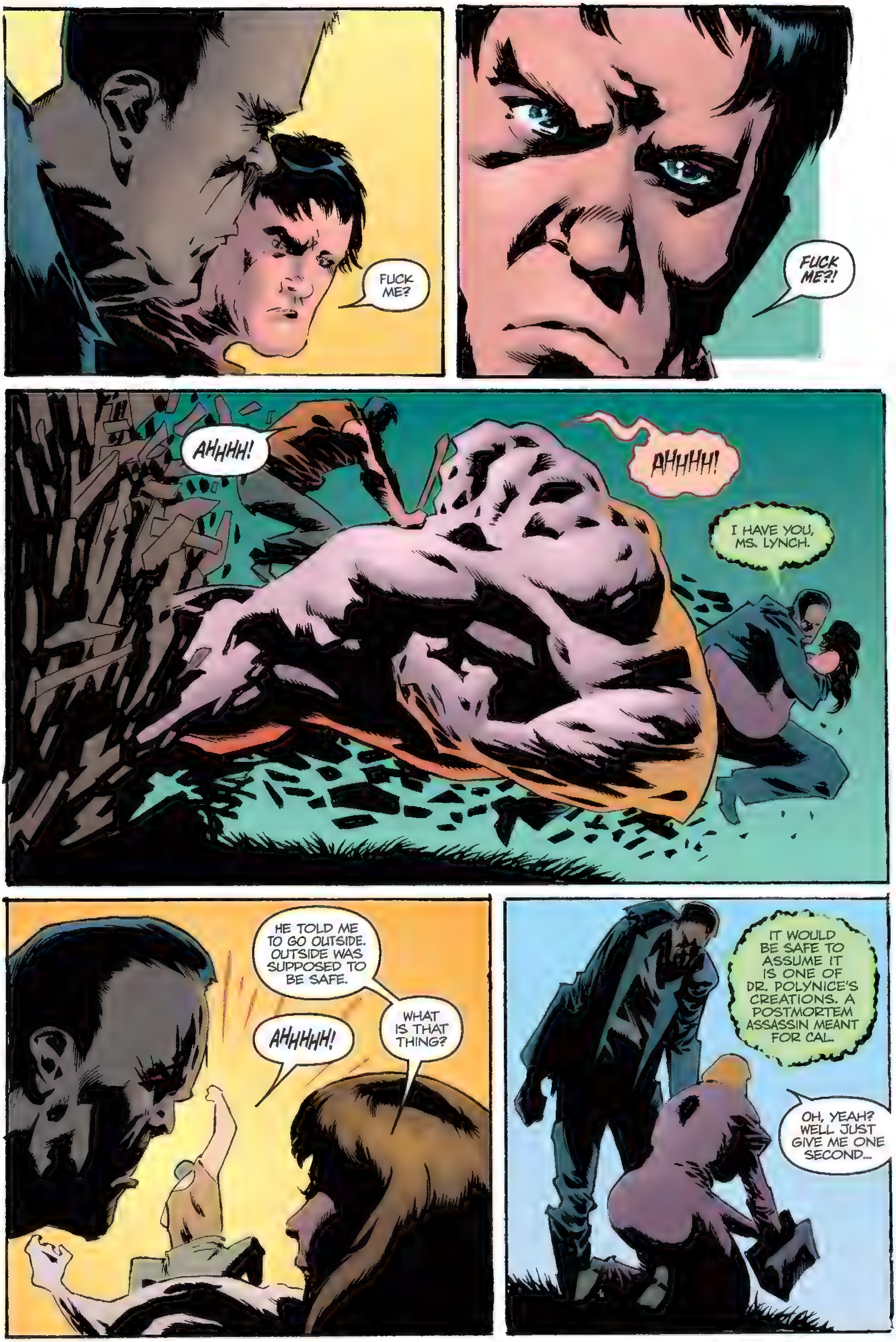

DON'T, CAL. JUST DON'T.
HAVE THEY FOUND HER?
NO. NO, NOT YET.
IT'S MY FAULT.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE GONE AFTER HER IF IT WASN'T FOR ME.
SHE'S ALSO A COP, CAL. SHE KNOWS THE RISKS.
WHAT WAS THAT?
PROBABLY THE CAR DOING DONUTS ON ITS OWN.


I SHOULD BE OUT THERE LOOKING FOR HER.
I HAVE SPREAD THE WORD.
IF BRUEGER IS FOUND, THEY WILL INFORM US. BESIDES, SINCE YOU SAW FIT TO SHOOT POLYNICE'S HEAD OFF, I WOULD THINK LYING LOW IS THE BEST ACTION RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
GOD, LOOK AT HER. I WISH I COULD SLEEP LIKE THAT.
PERHAPS IF YOUR BODY WASN'T OVERLOADED WITH CHEMICALS, YOU COULD SLEEP LIKE MS. LYNCH.
SPAK
THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE ROOF.
DON'T PANIC. IT'S PROBABLY JUST A...

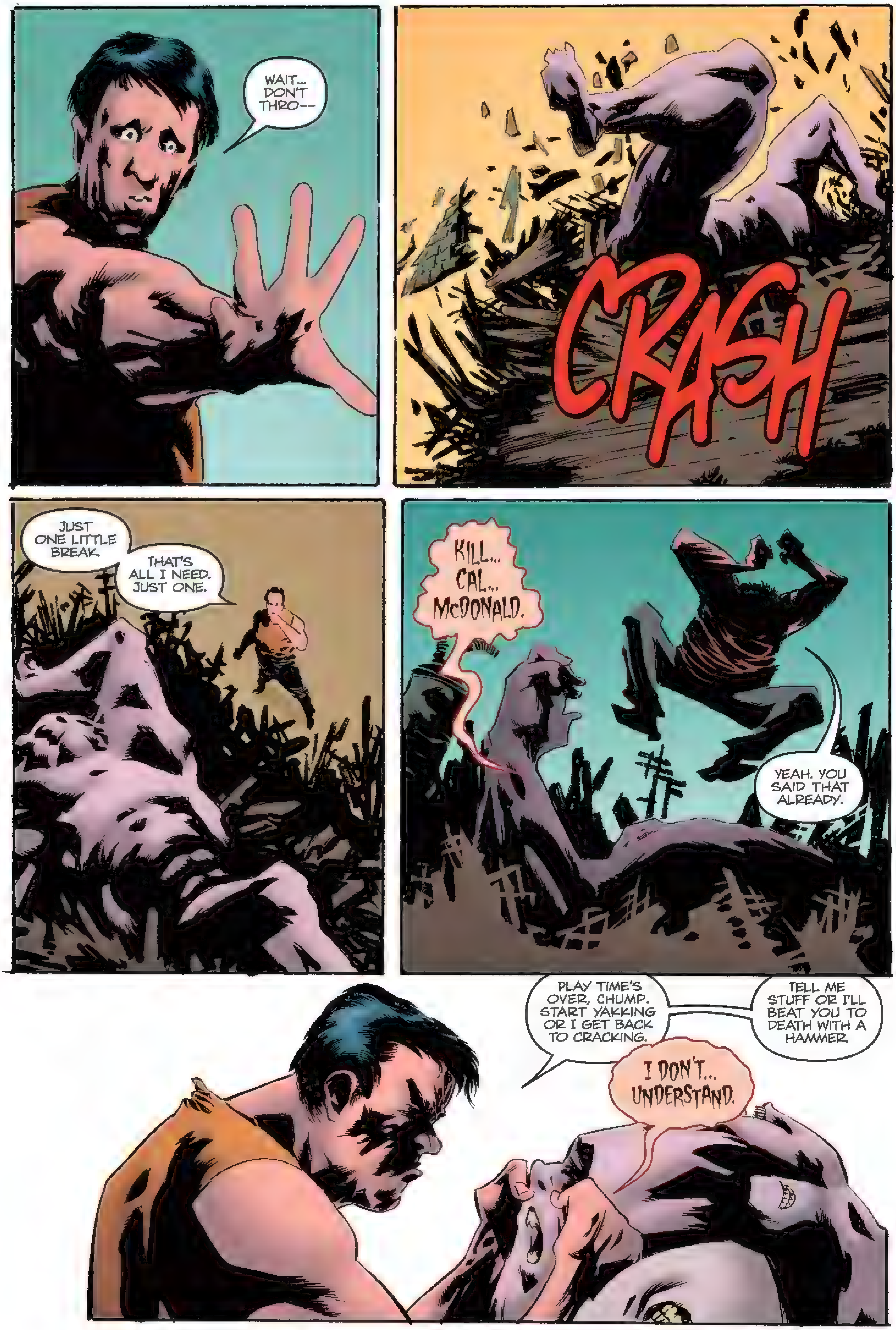
...SQUIRREL.
KRA-KRAKT!
ARRRRGH! KILL CAL McDONALD! KIIIIIIL!
I JUST CAN'T CATCH A FUCKING BREAK.

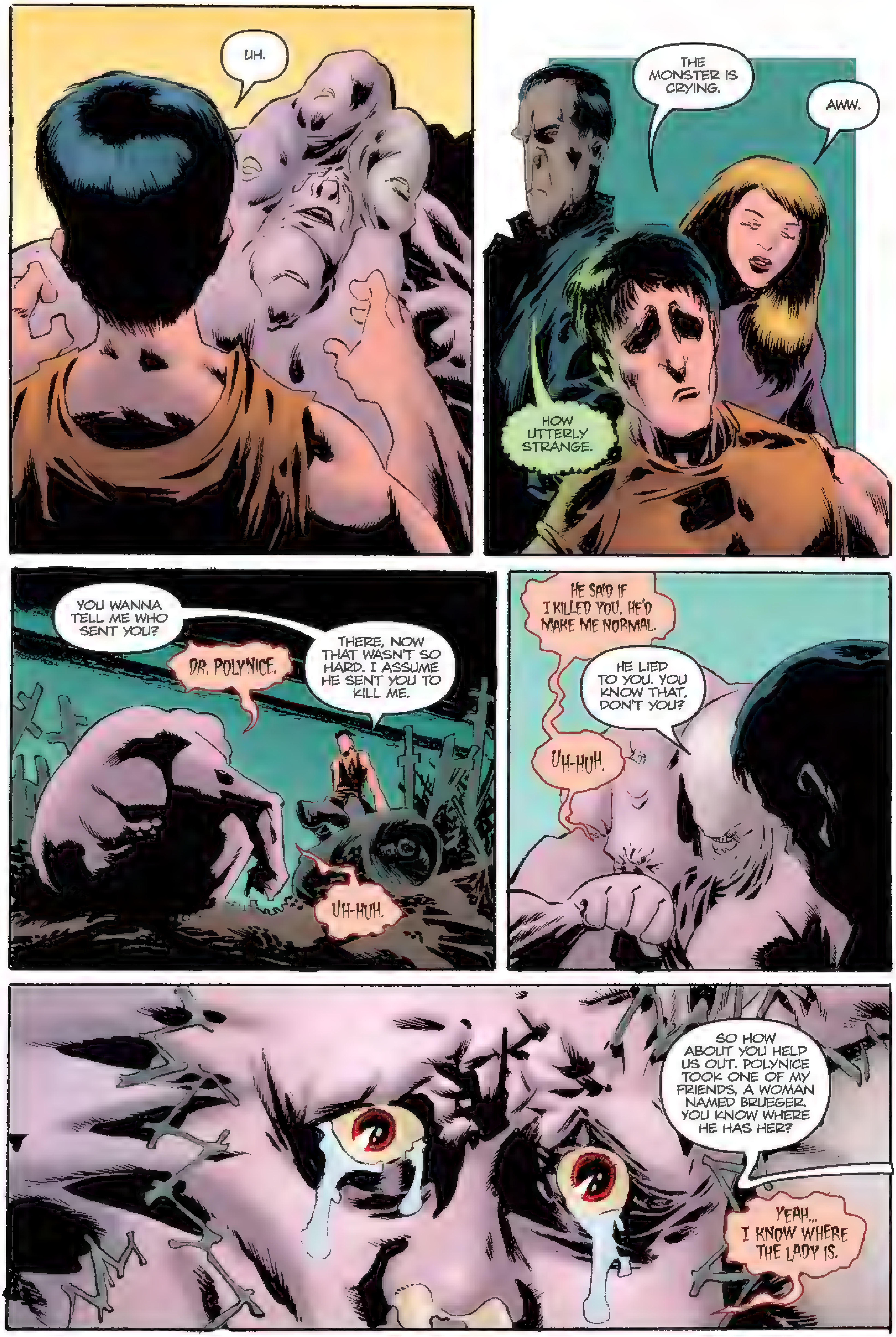

IT DIDN'T TAKE EINSTEIN TO FIGURE OUT THIS FREAK WAS POLYNICE'S WORK.
CHRIST, EVEN DEAD, MY ENEMIES MANAGE TO SCREW WITH ME.
GO! GET OUT OF HERE!
GO WHERE?
ANYWHERE BUT HERE!
THE THING STANK LIKE GYM SOCKS SOAKED IN URINE. I WANTED TO JUST UNLOAD MY GUN IN HIS FACE SO BAD I CAN'T TELL YOU.
BUT SOMETHING TOLD ME NOT TO KILL THE THING TOO QUICKLY.
IT WAS A FREAK, BUT ALSO MAYBE MY ONLY LINK BACK TO POLYNICE AND ALSO BRUEGER.

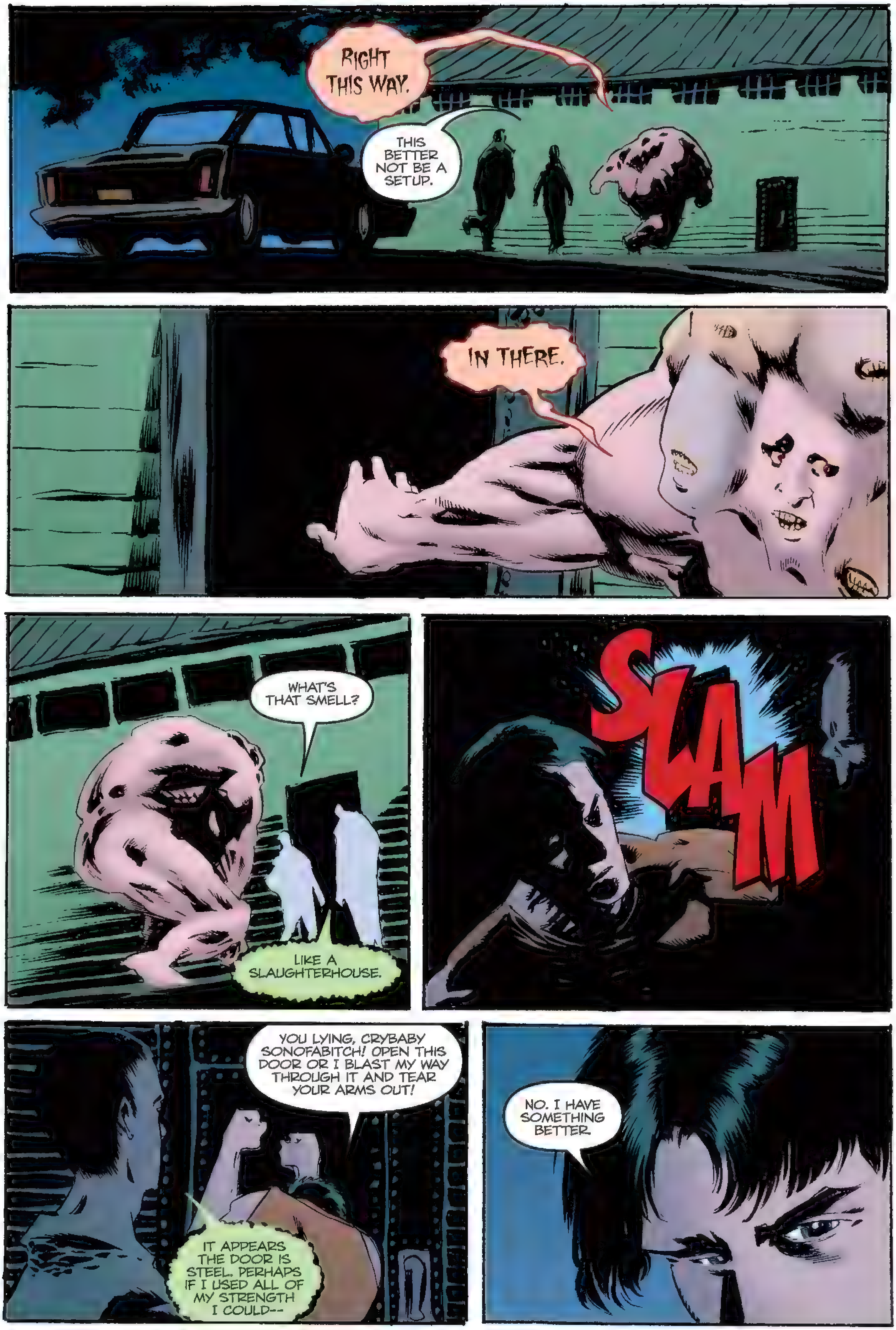
THIS THING MIGHT KNOW WHERE SHE WAS.
YOU BROKE MY HOUSE.
BUT JUST TO BE CLEAR, I DECIDED NOT TO KILL IT... HURTING IT WAS ANOTHER MATTER.
KRACK
WHAT'S THE PLAN, CAL?
WAK
KNOCK SOME MANNERS INTO THE FREAK, AND THEN I WANT TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS.
YOU WANNA TALK OR KEEP FIGHTING? BECAUSE WE HAVE PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.
PHUCK OOOO!

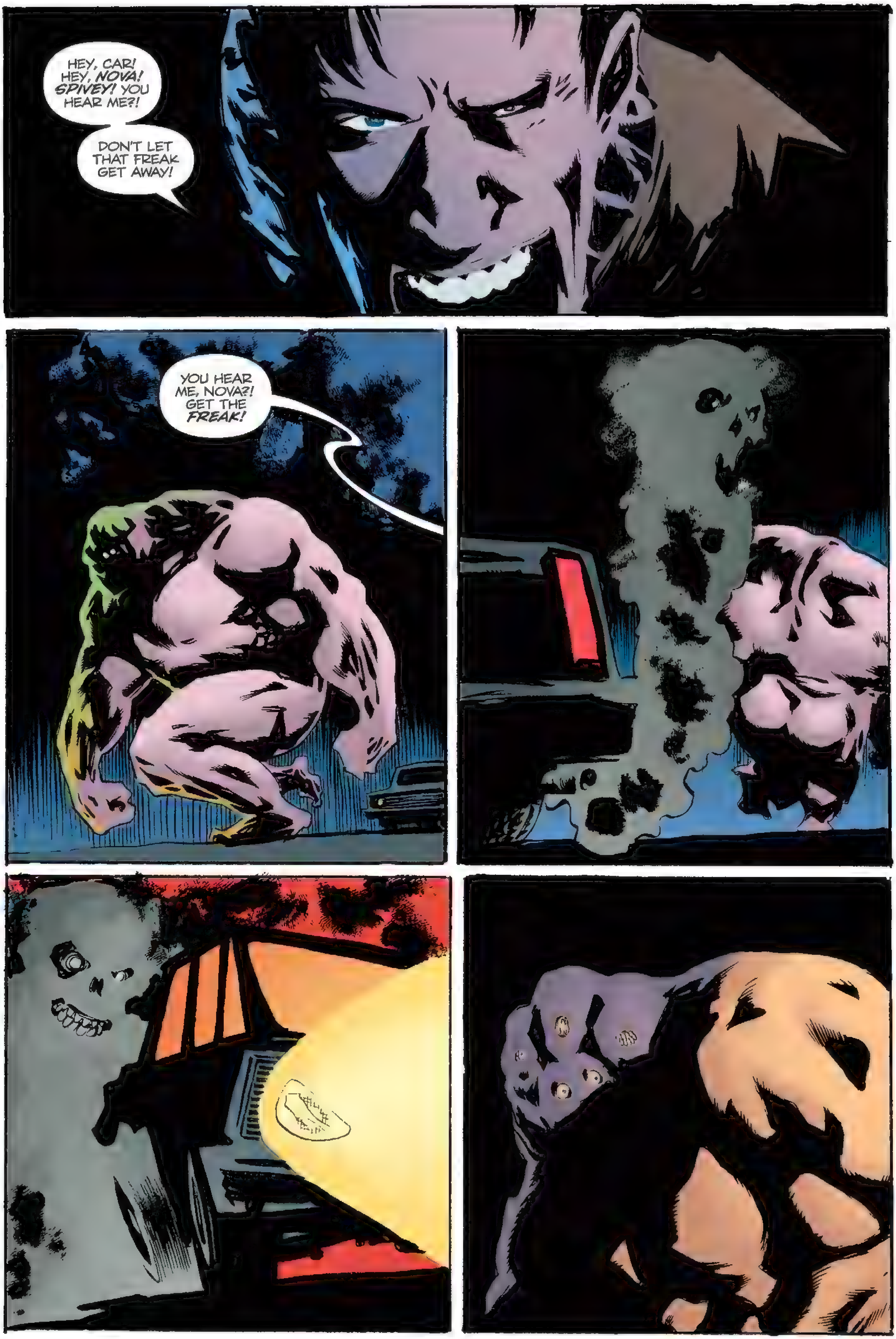

FUCK ME?
FUCK ME?!
AHHHH!
AHHHH!
I HAVE YOU, MS. LYNCH.
HE TOLD ME TO GO OUTSIDE. OUTSIDE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SAFE.
AHHHHH!
WHAT IS THAT THING?
IT WOULD BE SAFE TO ASSUME IT IS ONE OF DR. POLYNICE'S CREATIONS. A POSTMORTEM ASSASSIN MEANT FOR CAL.
OH, YEAH? WELL JUST GIVE ME ONE SECOND...

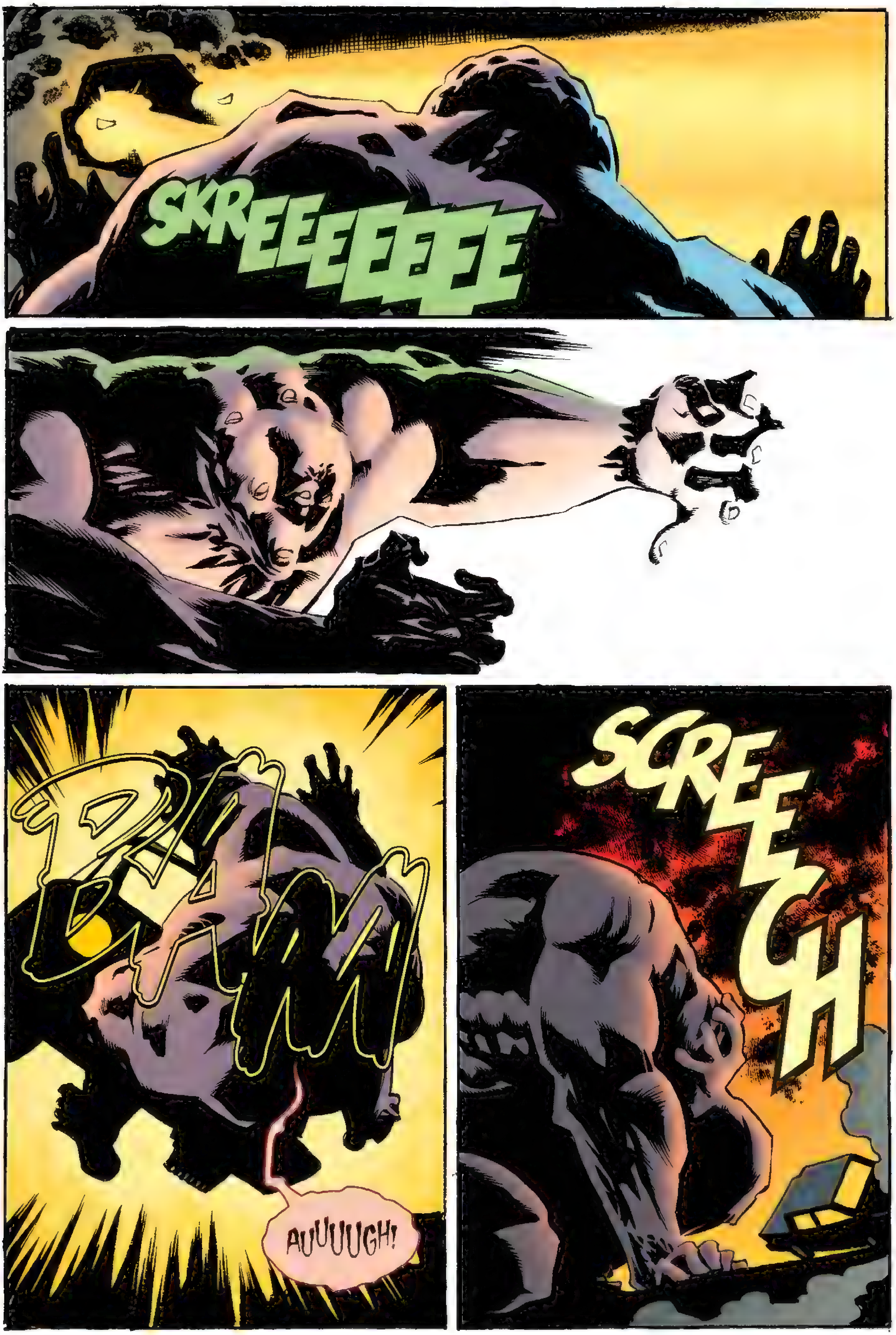
OOF! OKAY, YOU GIVE UP?
ARRRGH! I KILL CAL McDONALD!
NOBODY'S KILLING ANYBODY.
AAAAUGH!
ALLOW ME, MS. LYNCH.
PLEASE DO.

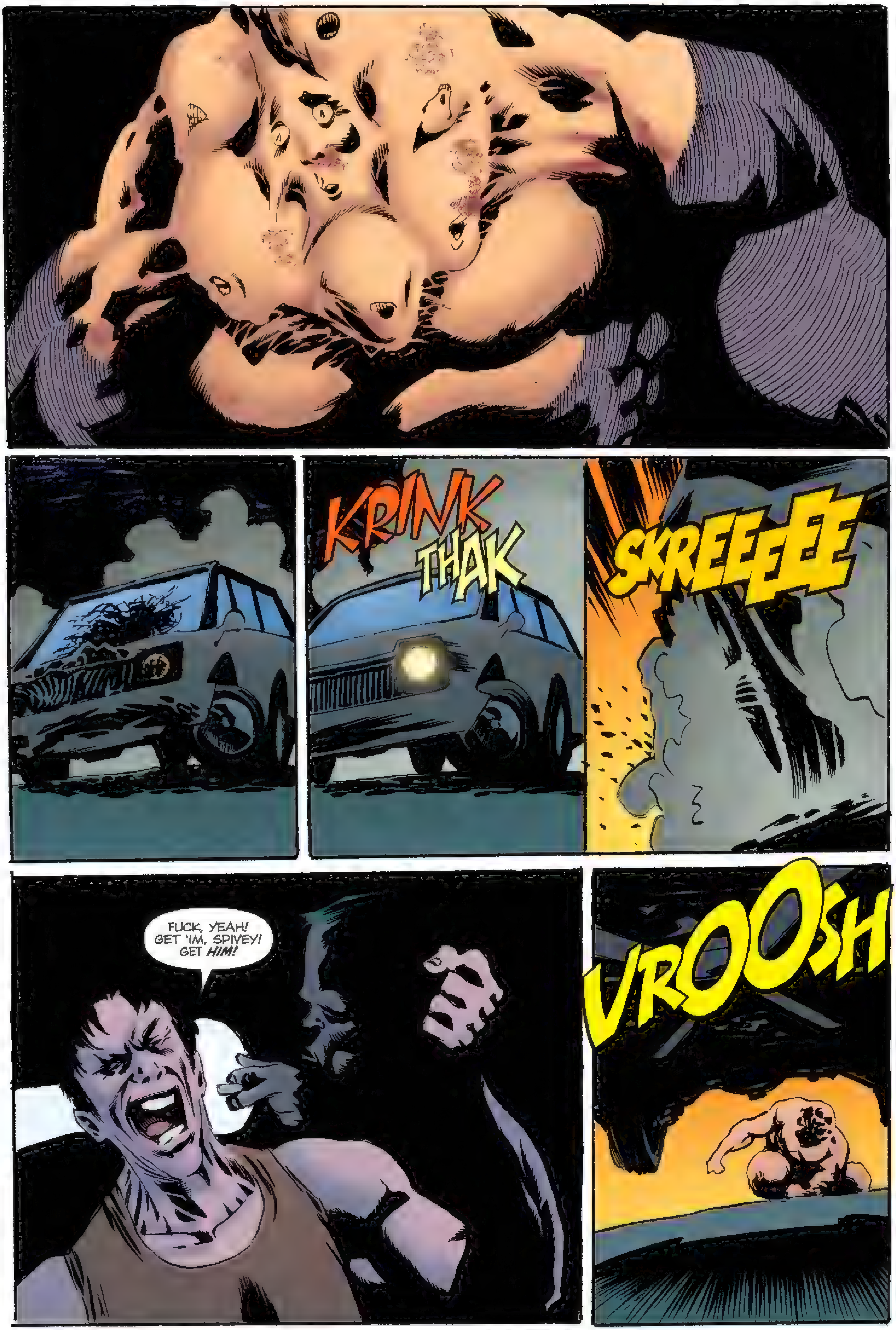

WAIT... DON'T THRO--
CRASH
JUST ONE LITTLE BREAK.
THAT'S ALL I NEED. JUST ONE.
KILL... CAL... McDONALD.
YEAH. YOU SAID THAT ALREADY.
PLAY TIME'S OVER, CHUMP. START YAKKING OR I GET BACK TO CRACKING.
TELL ME STUFF OR I'LL BEAT YOU TO DEATH WITH A HAMMER.
I DON'T... UNDERSTAND.


UH.
THE MONSTER IS CRYING.
AWW.
HOW UTTERLY STRANGE.
YOU WANNA TELL ME WHO SENT YOU?
DR. POLYNICE.
THERE, NOW THAT WASN'T SO HARD. I ASSUME HE SENT YOU TO KILL ME.
UH-HUH.
HE SAID IF I KILLED YOU, HE'D MAKE ME NORMAL.
HE LIED TO YOU. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
UH-HUH.
SO HOW ABOUT YOU HELP US OUT. POLYNICE TOOK ONE OF MY FRIENDS, A WOMAN NAMED BRUEGER. YOU KNOW WHERE HE HAS HER?
YEAH... I KNOW WHERE THE LADY IS.


RIGHT THIS WAY.
THIS BETTER NOT BE A SETUP.
IN THERE.
WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
LIKE A SLAUGHTERHOUSE.
SLAM
YOU LYING, CRYBABY SONOFABITCH! OPEN THIS DOOR OR I BLAST MY WAY THROUGH IT AND TEAR YOUR ARMS OUT!
IT APPEARS THE DOOR IS STEEL. PERHAPS IF I USED ALL OF MY STRENGTH I COULD--
NO. I HAVE SOMETHING BETTER.


HEY, CAR! HEY, *NOVA!* *SPIVEY!* YOU HEAR ME?!
DON'T LET THAT FREAK GET AWAY!
YOU HEAR ME, NOVA?! GET THE *FREAK!*


SKREEEEEEE
BAM
AUUUUGH!
SCREEECH


KRINK
THAK
SKREEEEE
FUCK, YEAH! GET 'IM, SPIVEY! GET *HIM!*
VROOSH

SPLOOOSH

YEEEAH!
CAL... THERE'S SOMETHING OVER HERE.
WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW.
ANOTHER TRAP?
I DON'T THINK SO.
THE BLOOD HAS ALREADY STARTED TO CONGEAL.

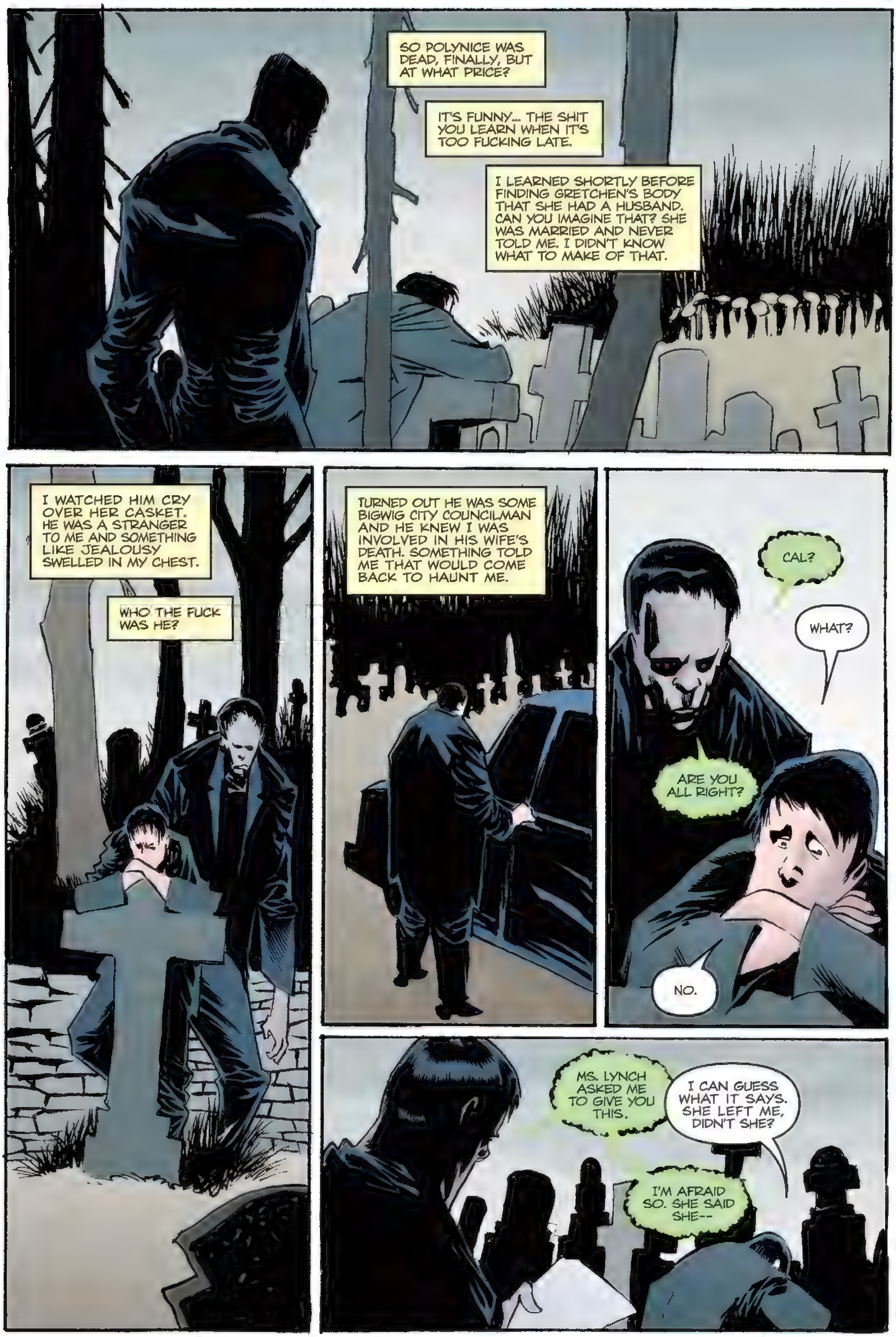
Dearest Cal-

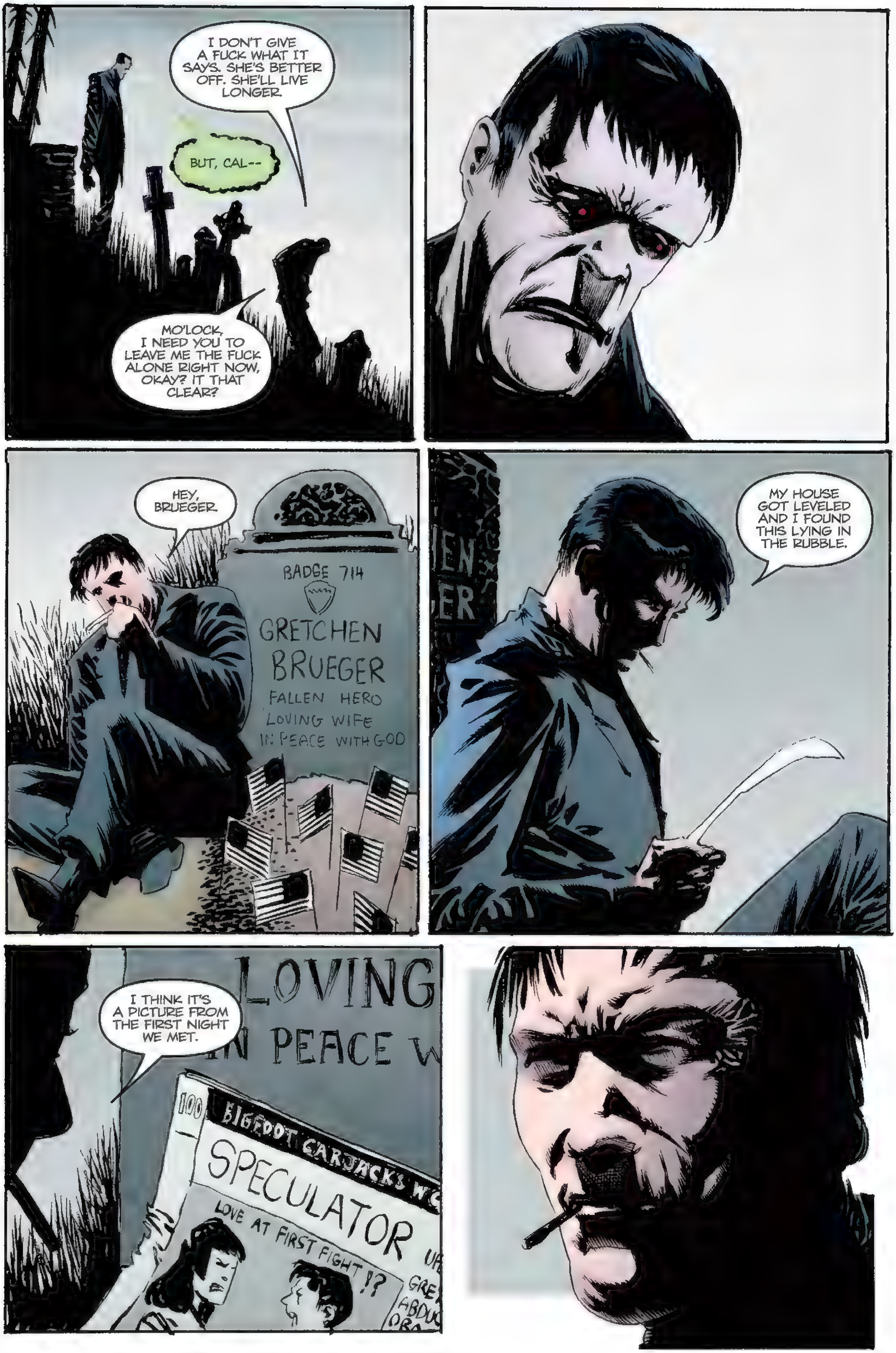
If you are reading this, then I am most likely dead. That is why I planted a device in my heart. If my heart stopped, the device would trigger a special surprise for you, Cal McDonald. Why, you could even say you pulled the trigger twice... Once on me and once on your friend Lieutenant Brueger.

Best in Death-
Dr. Polynice

GRETCHEN!
GRETCHEN!
HERE, CAL. ALLOW ME TO ASSIST.
CHA CRACK
NO.
NO.
NO.

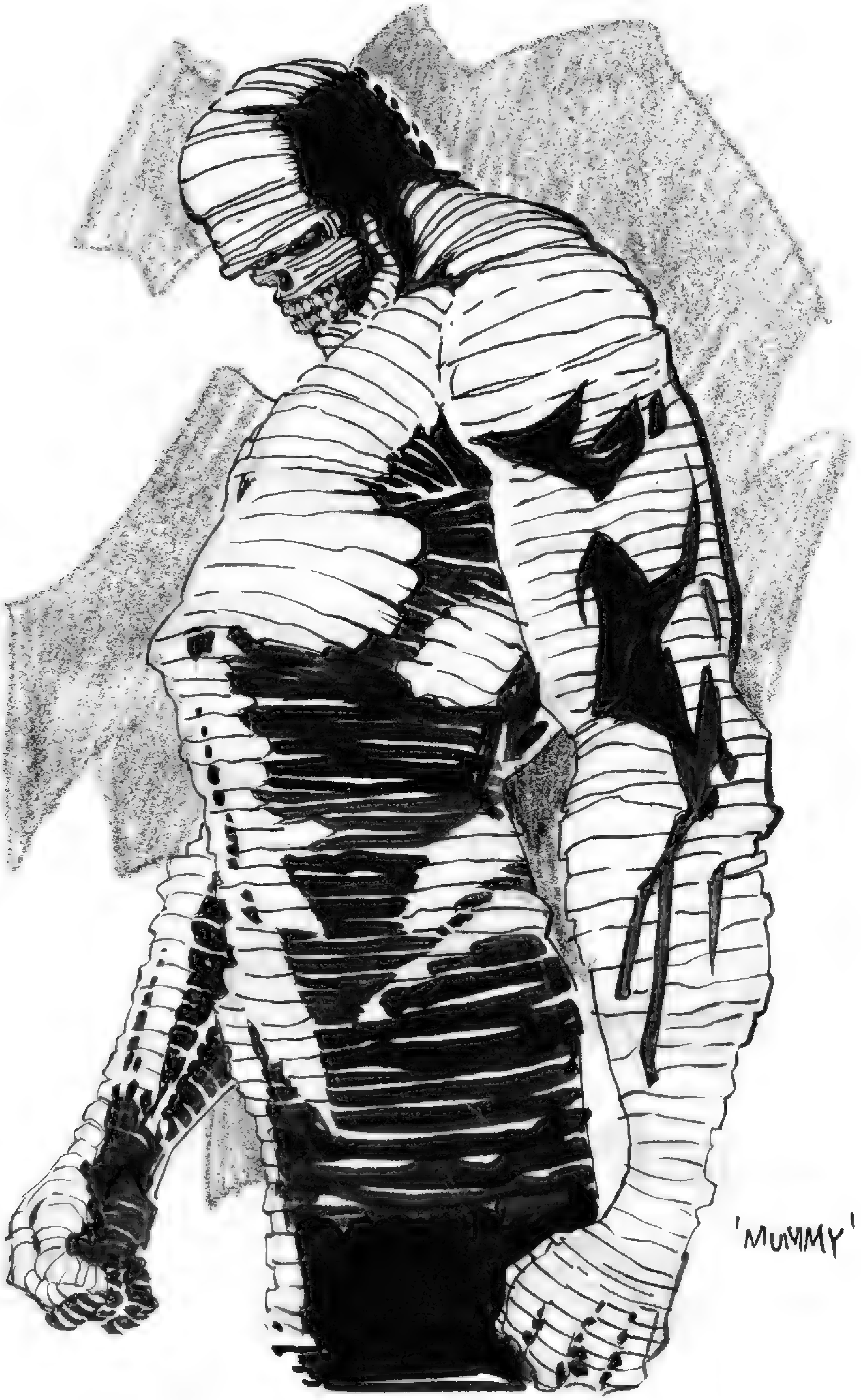
THE WORLD SHATTERED AND CHUNKS OF THE VILE PLACE STUCK IN MY THROAT.
I HATED EVERYTHING.
EVERYBODY.
MOST OF ALL, MYSELF.
BRUEGER WAS DEAD, SLAUGHTERED, PROBABLY TORTURED, AND I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE PULLED THE TRIGGER.
MY MIND REELED. MY THOUGHTS RICOCHETED BETWEEN UNIMAGINABLE ACTS OF VIOLENCE I WANTED TO COMMIT... AND THE BOTTOMLESS STUPOR OF DRUGS I WANTED TO DIVE INTO.
HOW FUCKING SICK IS THAT?
MY FRIEND, SOMEONE WHO'D HELPED ME, SIDED WITH ME WHEN NO ONE ELSE WOULD, LAY DEAD IN FRONT OF ME AND I HAD THE SELFISH, SICK GALL TO THINK OF A PILL OR A DRINK.
AND FOR AN INSTANT I THOUGHT OF STICKING MY GUN TO MY OWN TEMPLE.
BUT NONE OF IT WOULD BRING LIEUTENANT GRETCHEN BRUEGER BACK FROM THE DEAD.

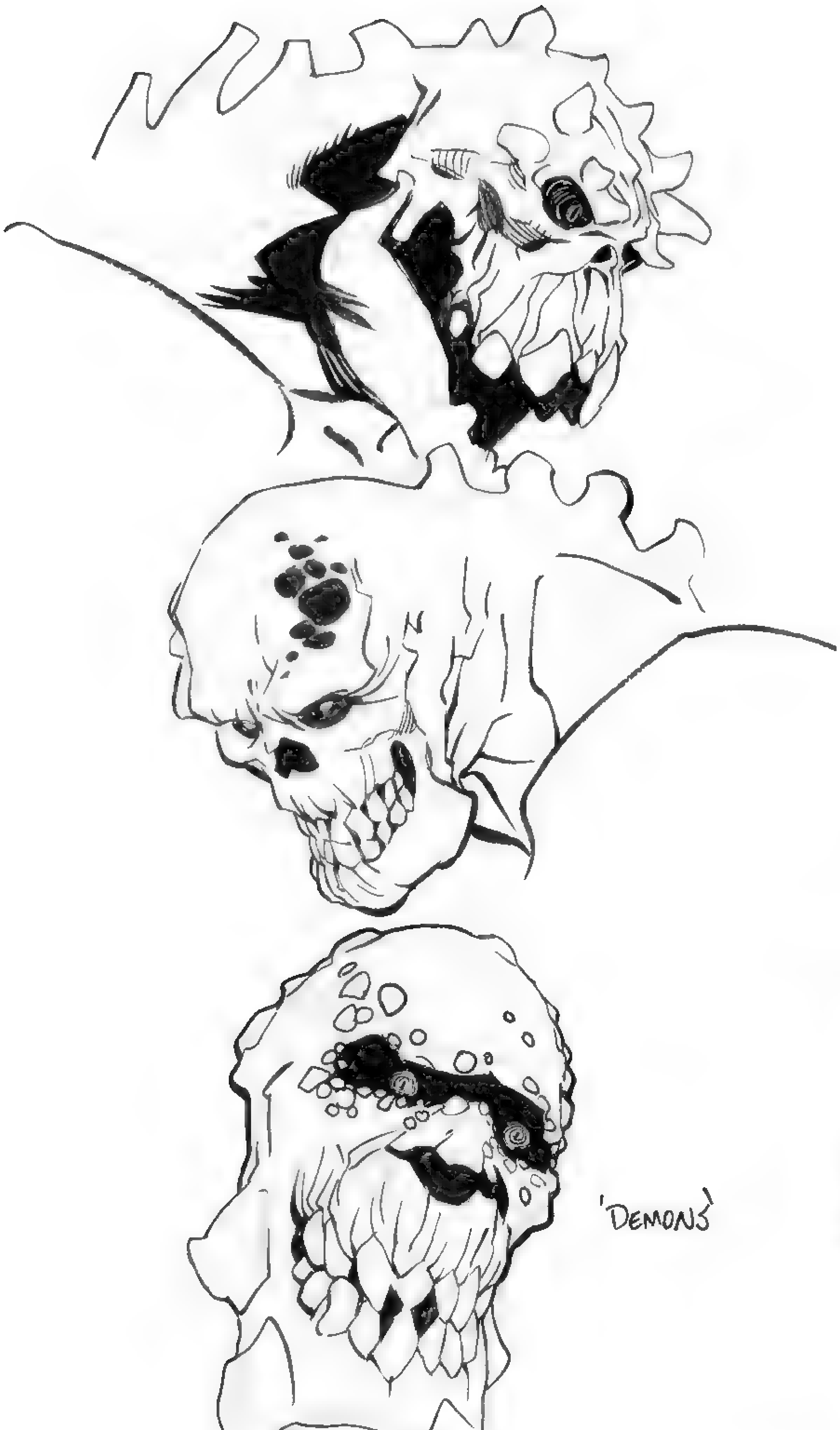

SO POLYNICE WAS DEAD, FINALLY, BUT AT WHAT PRICE?
IT'S FUNNY... THE SHIT YOU LEARN WHEN IT'S TOO FUCKING LATE.
I LEARNED SHORTLY BEFORE FINDING GRETCHEN'S BODY THAT SHE HAD A HUSBAND. CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT? SHE WAS MARRIED AND NEVER TOLD ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THAT.
I WATCHED HIM CRY OVER HER CASKET. HE WAS A STRANGER TO ME AND SOMETHING LIKE JEALOUSY SWELLED IN MY CHEST.
WHO THE FUCK WAS HE?
TURNED OUT HE WAS SOME BIGWIG CITY COUNCILMAN AND HE KNEW I WAS INVOLVED IN HIS WIFE'S DEATH. SOMETHING TOLD ME THAT WOULD COME BACK TO HAUNT ME.
CAL?
WHAT?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO.
MS. LYNCH ASKED ME TO GIVE YOU THIS.
I CAN GUESS WHAT IT SAYS. SHE LEFT ME, DIDN'T SHE?
I'M AFRAID SO. SHE SAID SHE--


I DON'T GIVE A FUCK WHAT IT SAYS. SHE'S BETTER OFF. SHE'LL LIVE LONGER.
BUT, CAL--
MO'LOCK, I NEED YOU TO LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE RIGHT NOW, OKAY? IT THAT CLEAR?
HEY, BRUEGER.
BADGE 714
GRETCHEN BRUEGER
FALLEN HERO
LOVING WIFE
IN PEACE WITH GOD
MY HOUSE GOT LEVELED AND I FOUND THIS LYING IN THE RUBBLE.
I THINK IT'S A PICTURE FROM THE FIRST NIGHT WE MET.
LOVING
IN PEACE W
100
BIGFOOT CARJACKS WO
SPECULATOR
LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT!?
GRE
ABDU

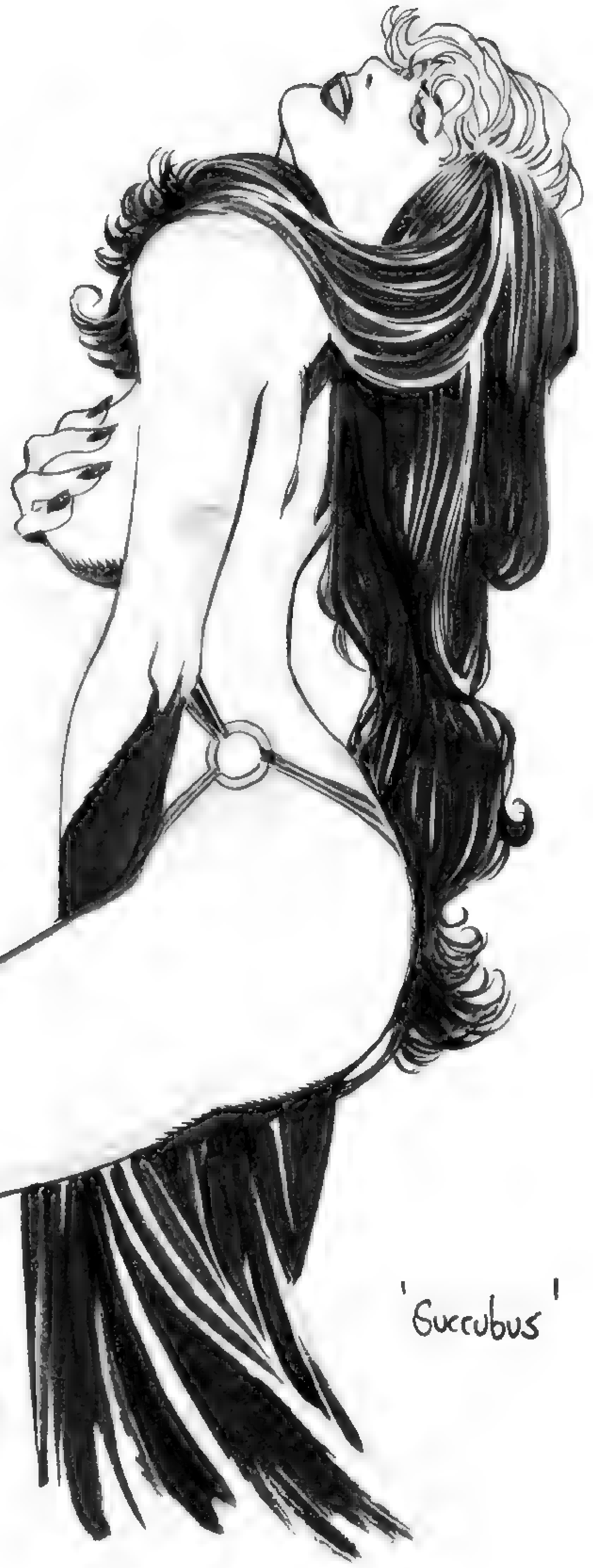
SO... ANYWAY. I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS FOR BELIEVING IN ME... AND I... I'M SORRY I LET YOU DOWN.
I DID SOME THINKING AND THIS IS THE LAST TIME I LET THIS HAPPEN. I'M GOING TO KEEP DOING WHAT I'M DOING... BUT NOBODY GETS CLOSE AGAIN.
IT'S BETTER THAT WAY.
TAKE CARE, BRUEGER. MAYBE I'LL SEE YOU AROUND SOMEDAY.
WEIRDER SHIT HAS HAPPENED.
THE END

Last Train to Deadsville character sketches by Kelley Jones

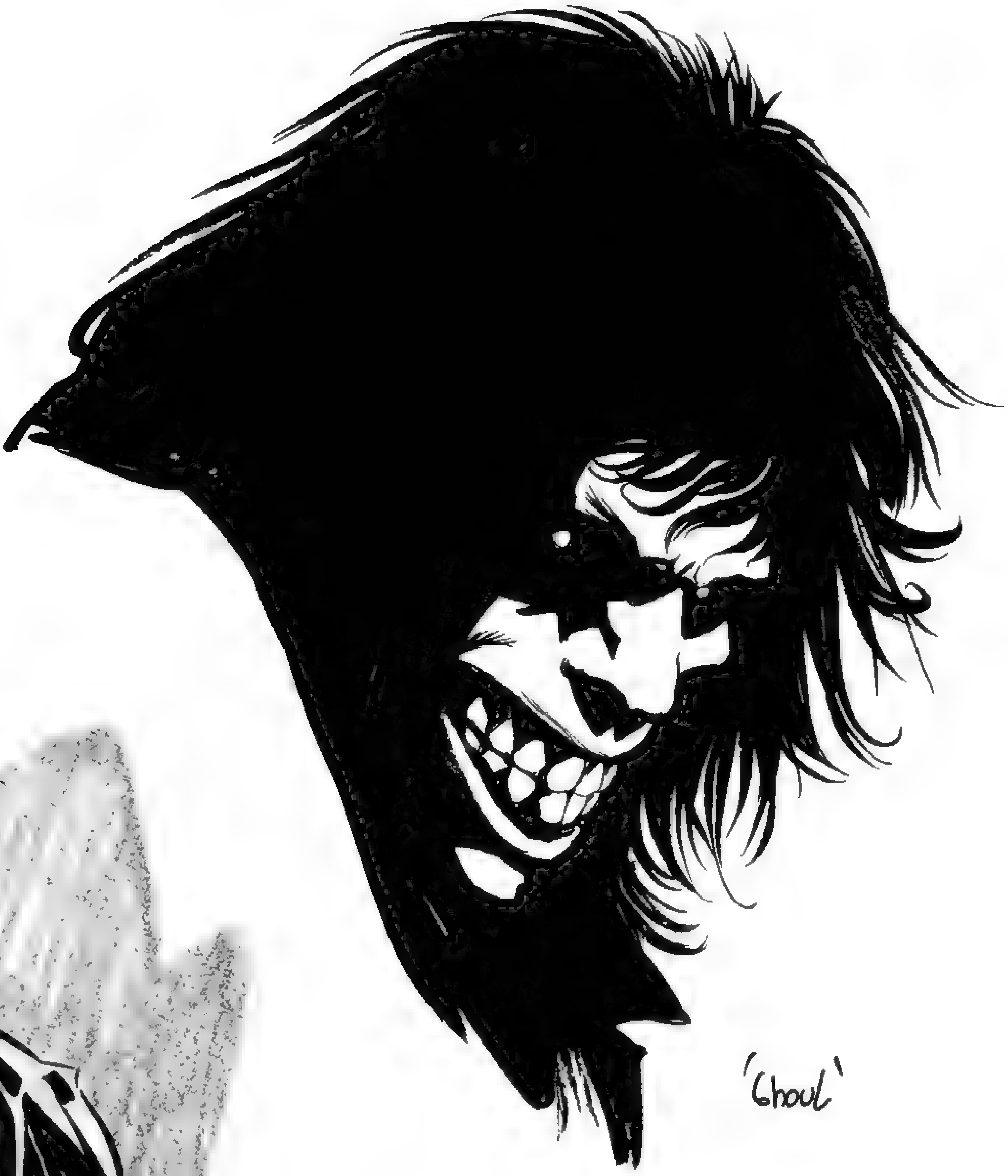




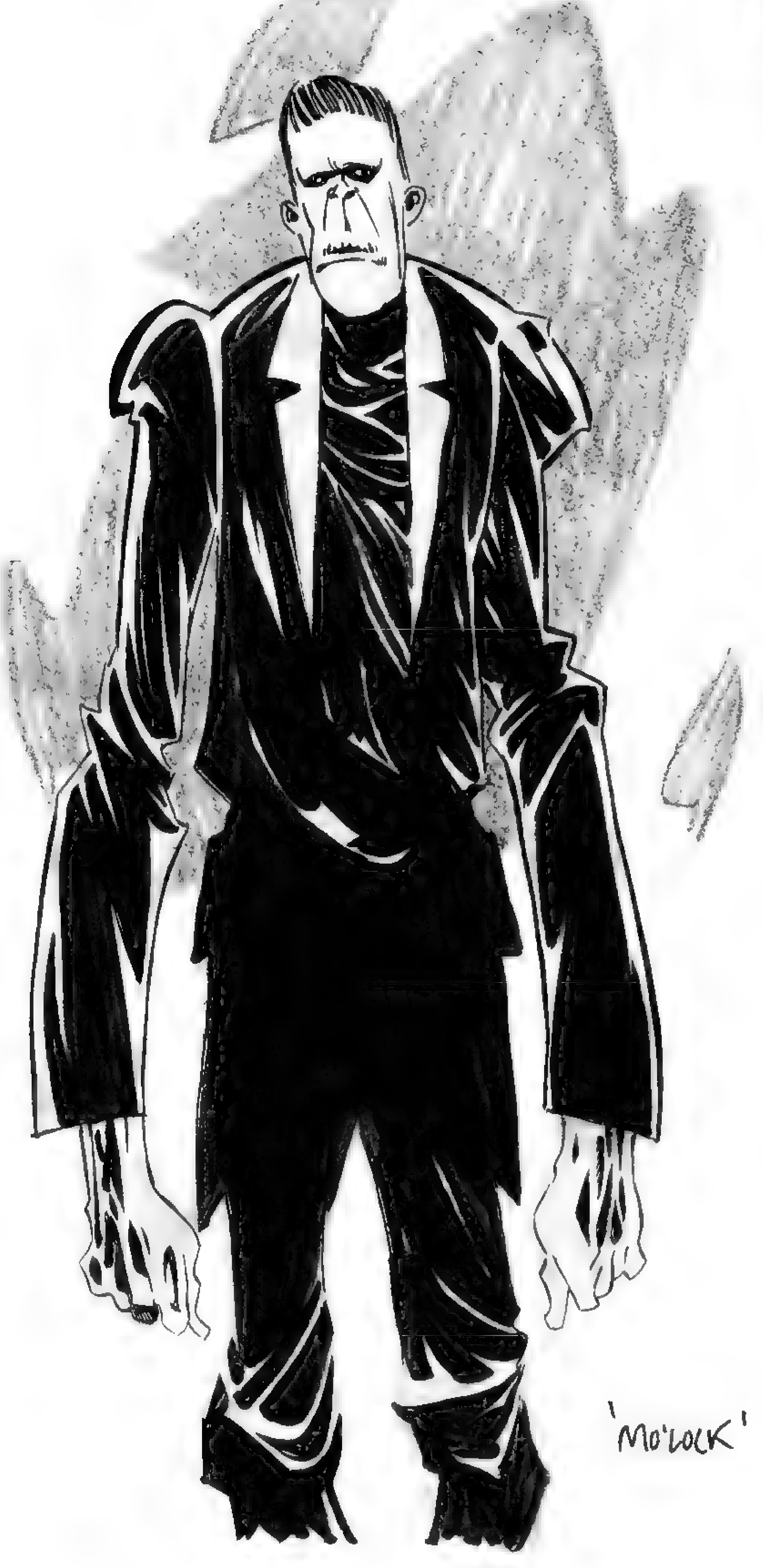
'Demons'



'Succubus'



'Ghoul'



'Mo'Lock'

STEVE NILES

Steve Niles writes comics, novels, and films. He is one of the writers responsible for bringing horror comics back to prominence. Niles got his start in the industry when he formed his own publishing company, Arcane Comix, where he published, edited, and adapted several comics and anthologies for Eclipse Comics. His adaptations include works by Clive Barker, Richard Matheson, and Harlan Ellison. IDW released hardcover and softcover collections of Niles's adaptation of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. Niles is currently working for the four top American comic publishers: Marvel, DC, Image, and Dark Horse. In 2002, he wrote *30 Days of Night*, which was made into a major motion picture with *Spider-Man*'s Sam Raimi producing and David Slade directing. Niles had a part in writing the screenplay. Steve resides in Los Angeles in his bachelor pad with five cats, two dogs, a tortoise, and the love of his life. While there's no crawlspace, there is a questionable closet in one corner, and no one is quite sure what is hidden in there . . . but we have an idea.

SteveNiles.com

BEN TEMPLESMITH

Contrary to popular mythology on the comic-book convention circuit, Ben Templesmith was not raised by dingoes, and he doesn't drink *that* much tequila. There is a lot about Ben that we don't know, and only a few things that we do: Ben was born in Perth, Australia, in 1978. He earned a BA in graphic design, majoring in illustration, and has made quite the reputation for himself as the go-to guy for dark, spooky illustrations in various industries, including comics, movies, books, and games. He likes sumo wrestling and cats, and he employs phrases such as "arsing about" to describe what he does with his time. If you can't find him in Australia or in Seattle, Washington, it's highly likely he's on a plane somewhere in the sky between those locales.

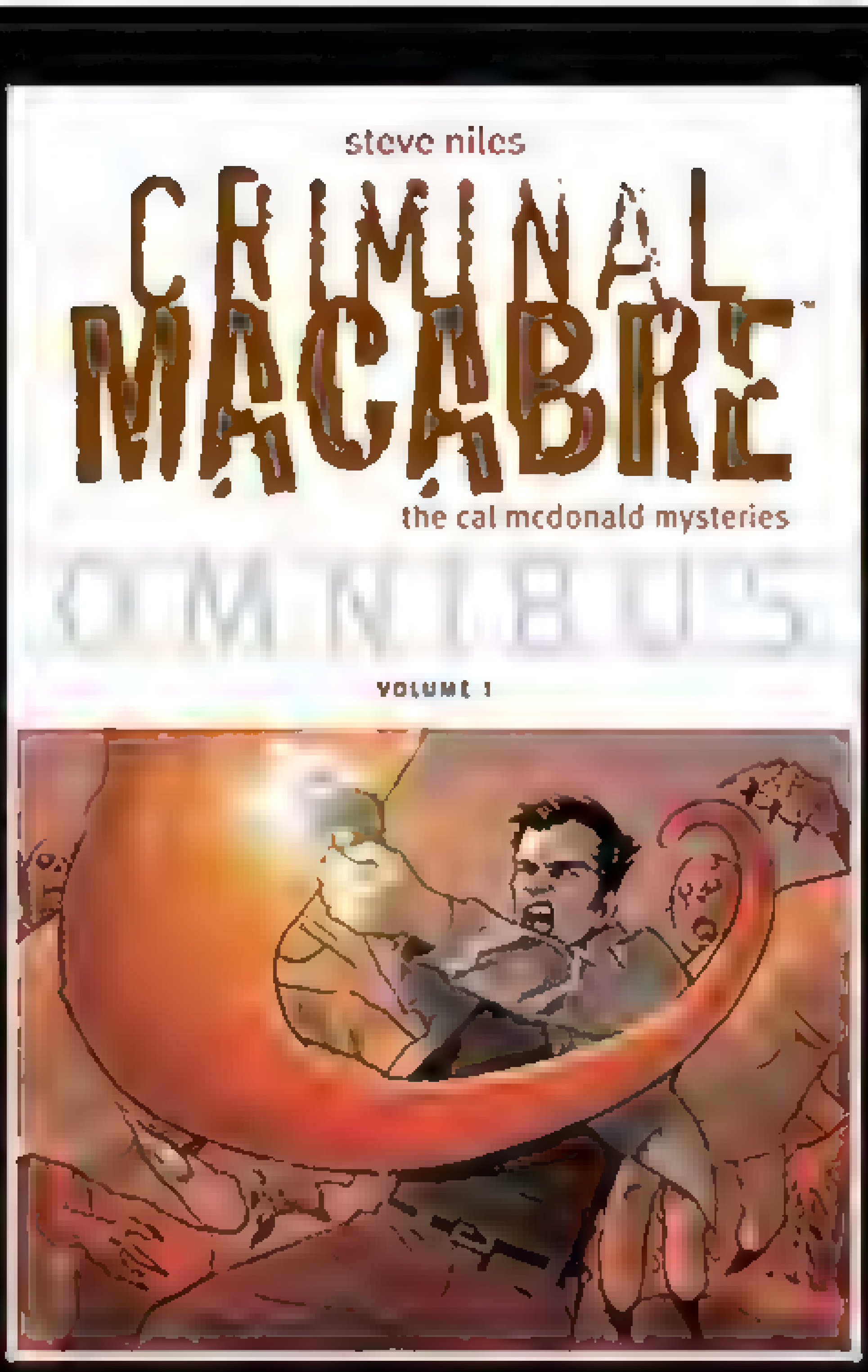
Templesmith.com

KELLEY JONES

Kelley Jones has been writing and drawing comics, using the blood of his victims, for almost two hundred years. The earliest recorded Kelley Jones sightings occurred in the Ozark Mountains in 1806, when settlers reported seeing a "wild and voracious man-beast, chewing the hindquarters off the freshly killed wild corpse of a large black bear." As the horror mounted with each subsequent appearance of Kelley Jones, so did the carnage—and the output of unsettling, horrific illustrations left behind at the scene of every killing.

Eventually, with the dawn of the twentieth century, modern man made an attempt to understand Kelley Jones, the Wendigo, Sasquatch, and other such monstrous creatures of North American mythology. Now, after decades of daring research, Kelley Jones has been assimilated into our contemporary culture, and his one definable skill—drawing spooky pictures—is rewarded with book-publishing contracts and chunks of raw buffalo meat. Further evidence of the existence of the fabled Kelley Jones can be found in the collected editions of *The Hammer* by Dark Horse Comics, and various *Batman* and *Deadman* releases by DC.

ALSO FROM STEVE NILES


steve niles
CRIMINAL MACABRE
the cal mcdonald mysteries
OMNIBUS
VOLUME 1

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VOLUME 1
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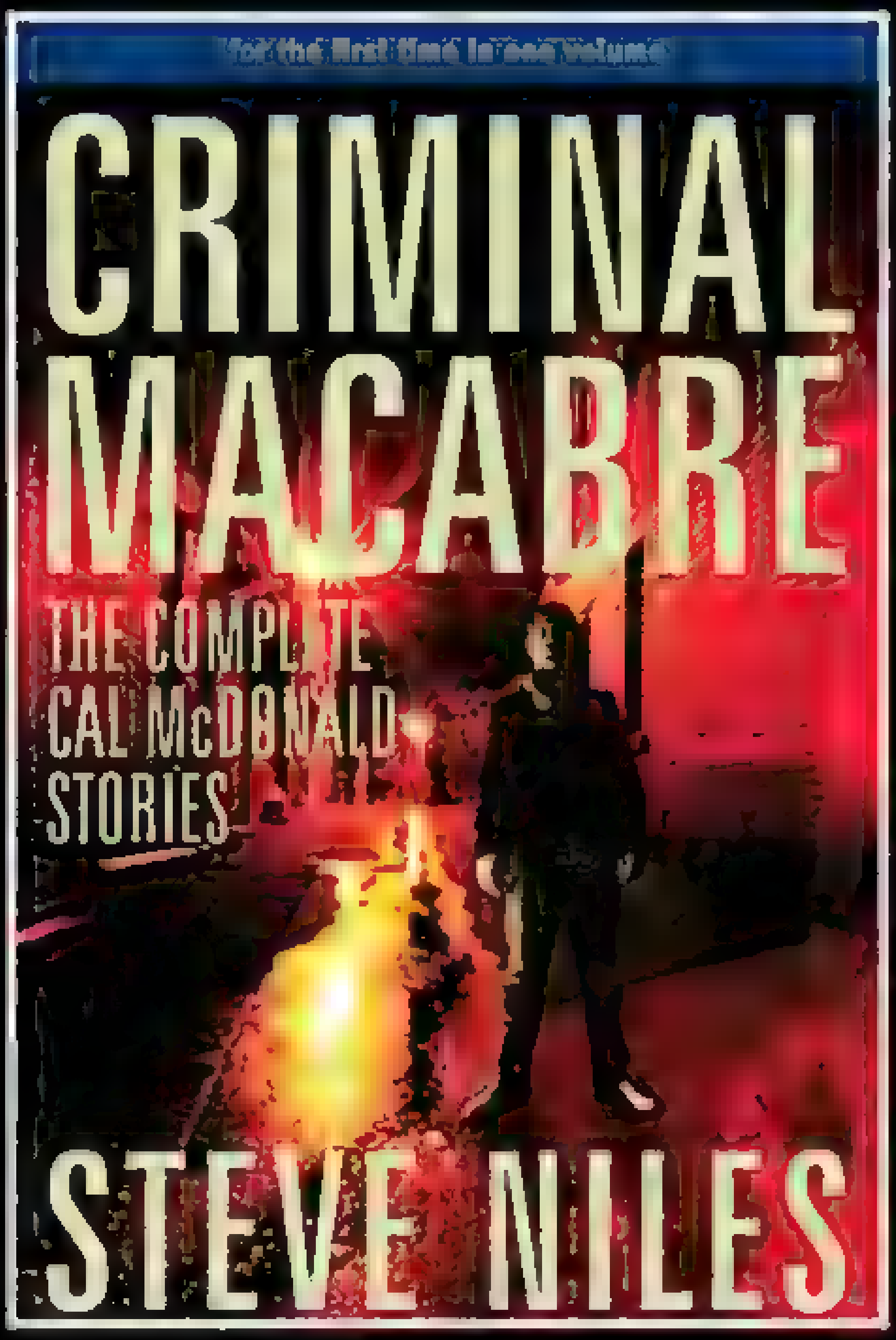
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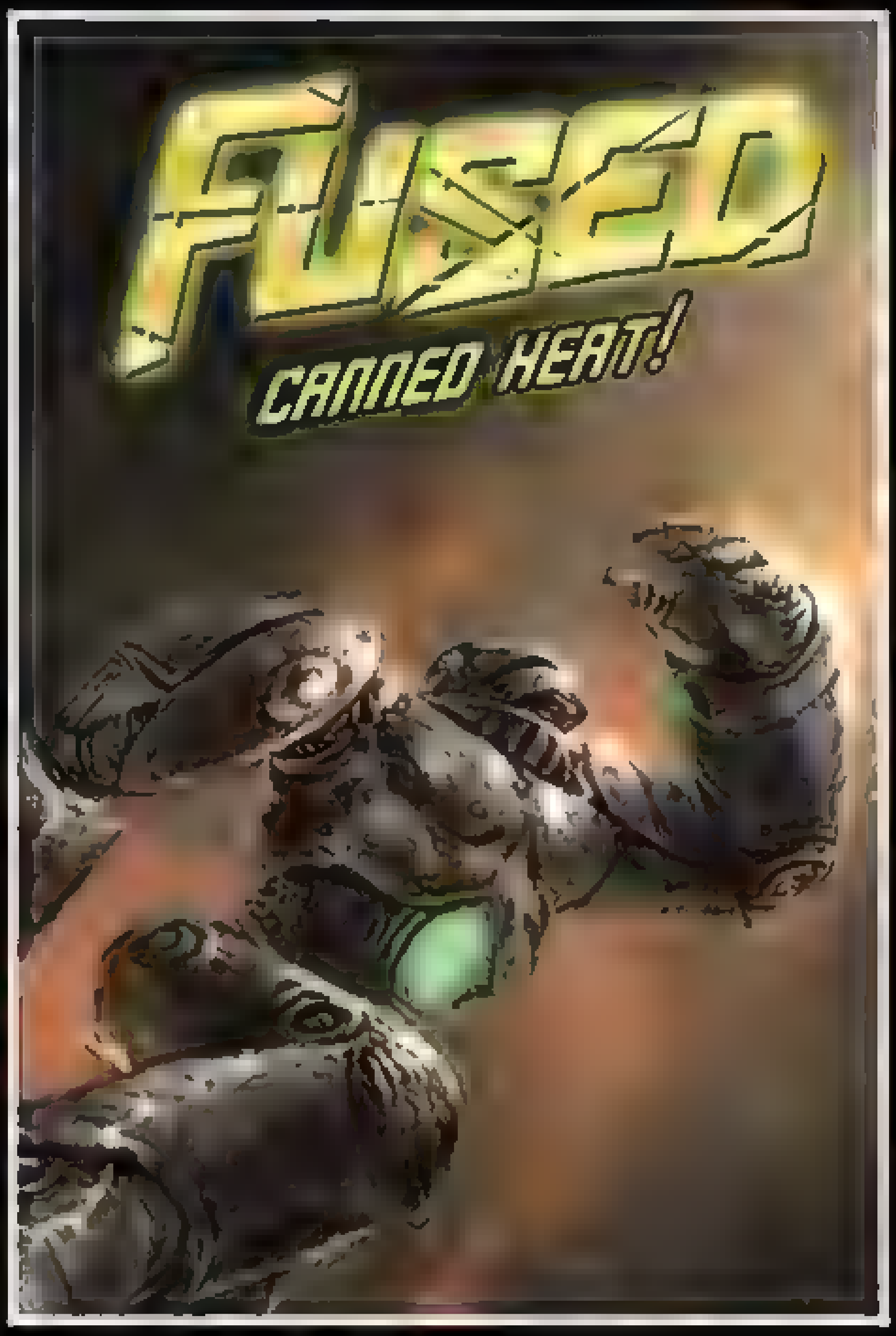
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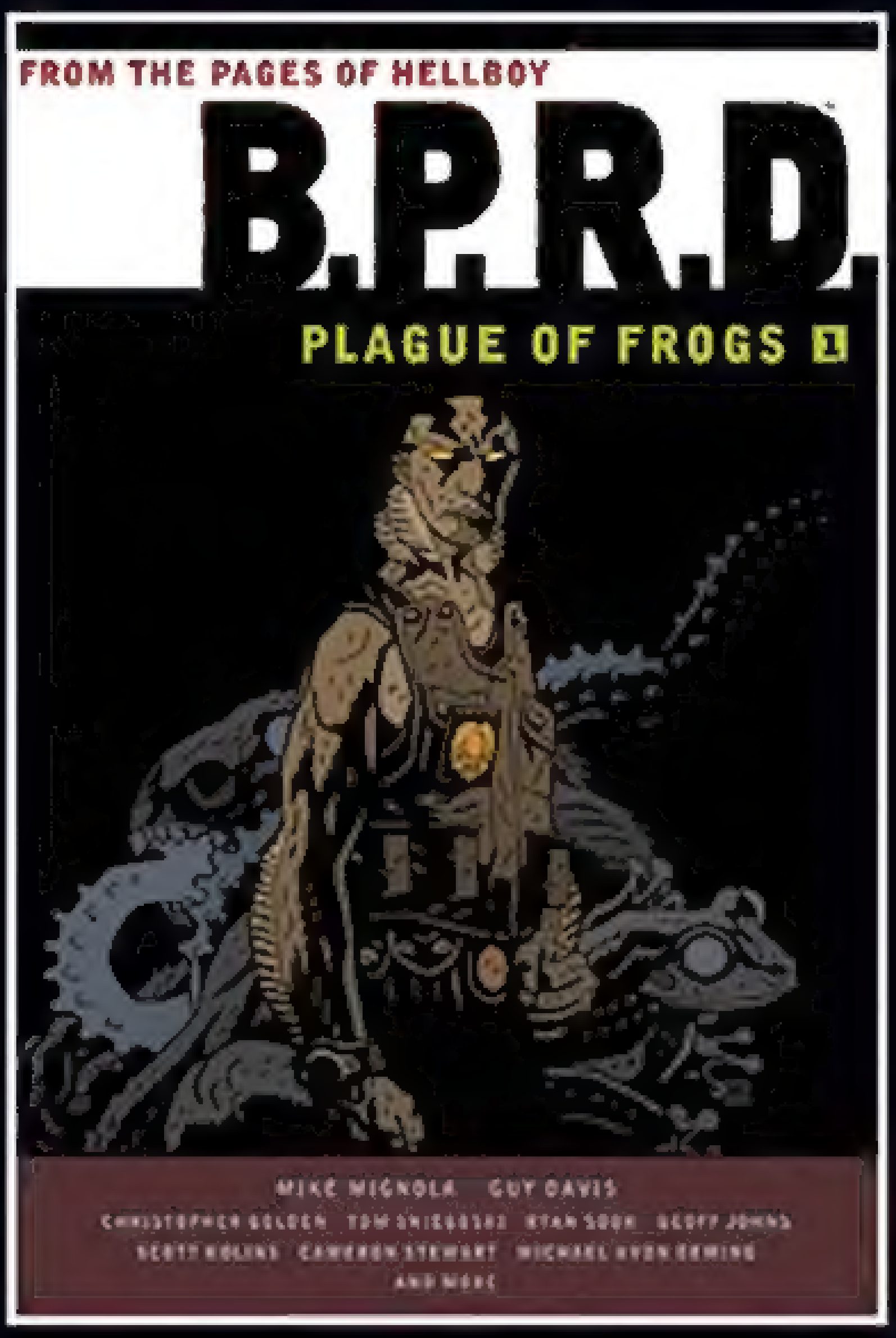
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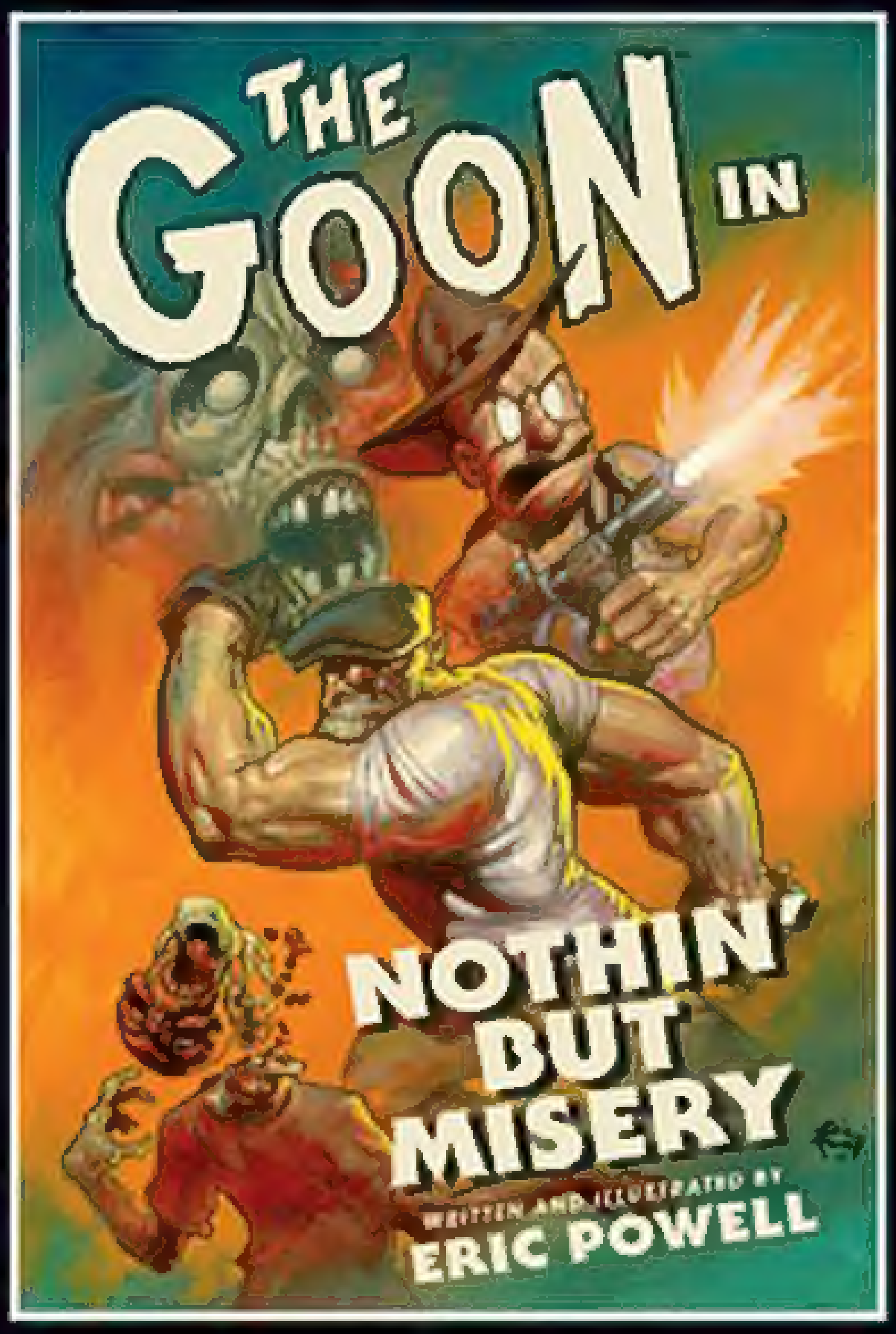
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NOTHIN' BUT MISERY
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ERIC POWELL

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Eric Powell

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steve niles

CRIMINAL MACABRE™

the cal mcdonald mysteries

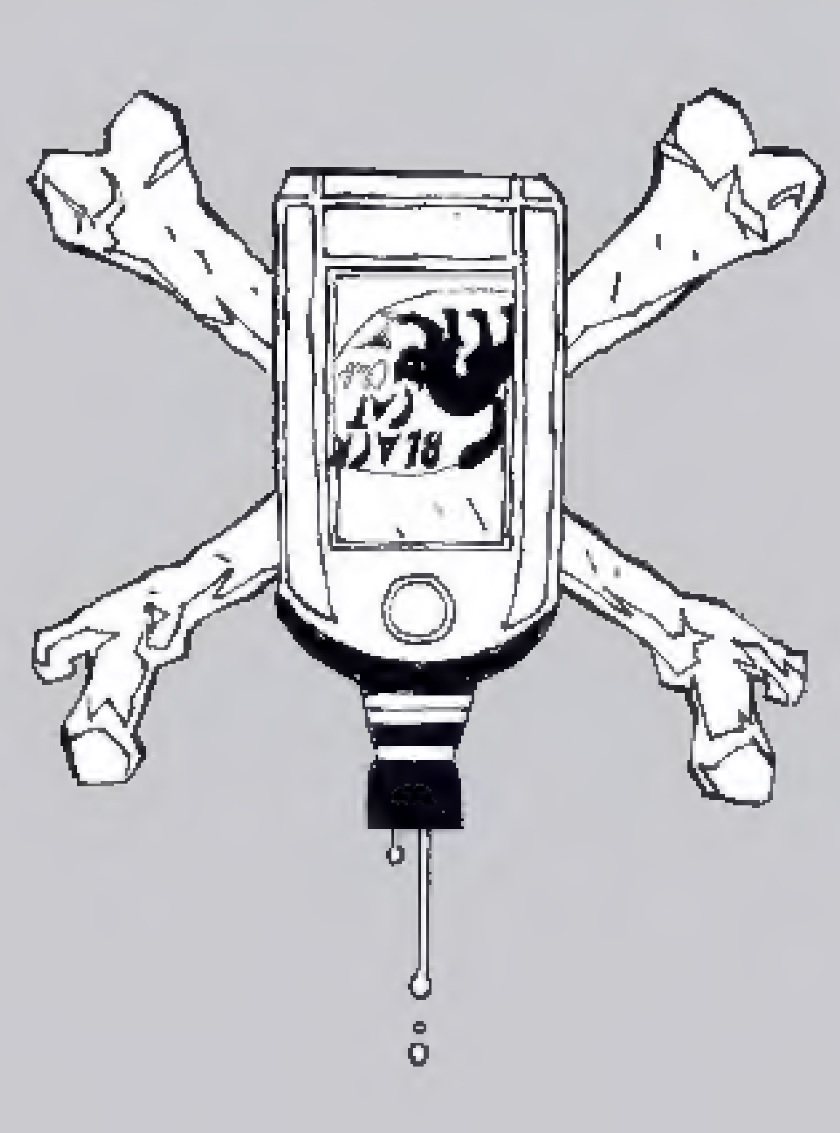
OMNIBUS

VOLUME 1

In 2003 Steve Niles, creator of the *30 Days of Night* comics series, launched a series of occult detective stories featuring the monstrously hard-boiled Cal McDonald. A pill-popping, alcoholic reprobate, Cal is the only line of defense between Los Angeles and a growing horde of zombies, vampires, possessed muscle cars, mad scientists, werewolves, and much more weirdness!

Featuring the haunting artwork of Ben Templesmith (*Fell*) and Kelley Jones (*The Sandman*), this volume collects the first two *Criminal Macabre* trades, the one-shot story *Love Me Tenderloin*, and the never-before-collected *Criminal Macabre: Supernatural Freak Machine*.

DARK HORSE BOOKS



ZONE